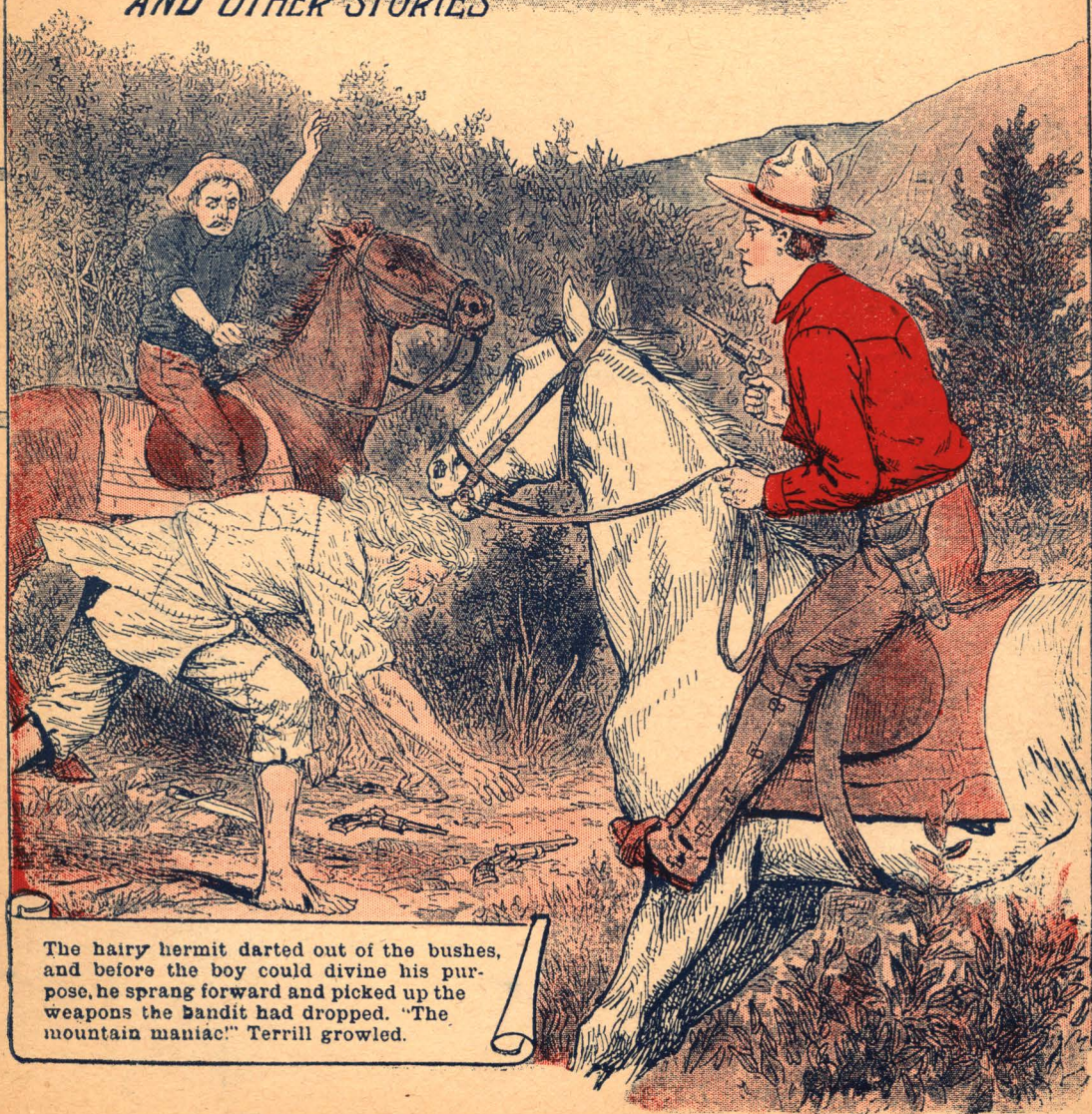


PLUCK AND LUCK

ROLLY ROCK OR CHASING THE MOUNTAIN BANDITS

By Richard R. Montgomery
AND OTHER STORIES



The hairy hermit darted out of the bushes, and before the boy could divine his purpose, he sprang forward and picked up the weapons the bandit had dropped. "The mountain maniac!" Terrill growled.

PLUCK AND LUCK

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ROLLY ROCK

OR, CHASING THE MOUNTAIN BANDITS

By RICHARD R. MONTGOMERY

CHAPTER I.—The Mountain Coach.

"Well, what do ye say? Shall I drive on, or will ye go back to the Blue Globe?"

A heavy old coach had stopped long after dark in the dismal Giacomo Pass of the Rocky Mountains. The inmates of the stage had been discussing the propriety and safety of going further that night, and had ordered the driver to hold up. Climbing down from his elevated position, he went to the door of the vehicle. Presently the question came rather impatiently, as we have given it above.

"Go ahead, I say," came an answer in a boyish voice.

"Hold, man!" came a sterner tone.

"Will I hold, what is it?" the driver returned, smiling.

"Why, this matter is not to be left to the recklessness of a beardless youth. If there's danger ahead, we'd better go back to the little tucked-up inn."

"I'se awful skeered myself, but I'se 'bout as feared goin' back to the hotel as goin' ahead."

There was only one more passenger to speak. The fine musical voice of a girl came to the driver's ears.

"At the Blue Globe they—that is, the landlord—told me that but few people were molested by the bandits."

"An' it's a fact," the lord of the reins answered.

"But all passengers are not worthy the attention of the road-agents," the gruff man put in.

"As ye don't agree, s'posin' we put it to vote," the driver suggested. "All who want to proceed say go, and all who don't say no."

"Go!" came promptly from the youth.

"Dat's as easy for me as de odder," the African responded.

"You know we are in a hurry, father; I think we had better continue."

After the girl had spoken the man at the door said abruptly:

"It's a vote."

The gruff voice was not heard. A negative would be of no use with three against him. The doors of the vehicle went together with a bang. A few seconds later a scrambling was heard over the wheel and the stage moved on again. Two of the passengers, as before hinted, were father

and daughter. A well-dressed gentleman of fifty was the parent, while the daughter was a girl of not more than seventeen years. This couple had started by stage from Gladbast to go to Extonville, and were the only occupants of the mountain stage up to an hour or two before. The stage arrived at the Blue Globe with these two, and left with the addition of the youth and darky. Nightfall had come when the stage reached the mountain inn. The two last passengers were evidently entire strangers to each other, and neither was known to the gentleman and his daughter. A band of road-agents were known to have their stronghold in the mountains somewhere near the Giacomo Pass, it was believed, for along its winding course many robberies had been committed. After the decision to make the venture, the old gentleman quized the darky closely. He directed his queries to the African because he was less reticent than the boy, and appeared to be better posted as to the pass and its besetting dangers.

"Dey has done a heap of robibn', dat's sartin," the negro said. "But dey don't tempt to take de hide off all de people."

"Do they murder for money?" the girl asked.

"Certainly, Madaline, they are a set of regular cut-throats," the father put in before the African had a chance to answer.

"Dat's whah ye's mistaken, sir. Capen 'Zolo don't hab to kill nobody if dey don't try to kill him; ef dey gibs up what dey's got, why, dat's de end ob de whole business."

The youth, who sat in the corner, moved about restlessly, and his blue eyes were set fiercely upon the negro. One or two incoherent words fell from his lips, but no one gathered their meaning. Madaline noticed that every time the moonlight fell upon the bright, youthful face the lad was watching the African in his every motion. She became interested. Colonel Wallace, her father, on the other hand, grew more and more nervous. He wore a heavy gold watch and chain worth several hundred dollars, and besides had other valuables amounting to as much more. Himself and daughter were armed with revolvers, but the colonel would hesitate about using his weapon in an emergency came. He generally watched for the best chance out, and did not allow himself to get hot-headed enough to hazard his life. The conver-

sation lagged after a time, and the quartette lapsed into entire silence. Another half hour passed and the road became more uneven. The coach of a sudden stopped. There came a rap upon the little window by the driver's seat, and a voice followed:

"We are now at Fazelo's Pit."

"In it?" the colonel interrogated.

"Just the edge of it."

"All right, go on."

The last was from the youth. He had not spoken before for a long time.

"I don't like dis heah business so well as de hossback ridin', what I'se 'customed to," the darky said, as the vehicle started on.

"What is that?" Colonel Wallace asked disinterestedly.

"Takin' de sheep across de mountains."

"Whose sheep?"

"For different gemmen."

"Ranchmen?"

"Dem's it; an' eb'ery sheep knowed me jis' as well as ef dey had been a flock of children."

The black peered from the window again. Half a minute passed, when he turned to the colonel and resumed:

"Yes, sah, dem sheep all knowed me. I'se got a little thing heah what'll call a sheep to me if a mile away. I jis' put it up to my mouf in dis way, and blow."

"Drop it!"

The words came with a fierceness that made the negro start. The muzzle of a revolver was held by the boy close to the ebony face.

"You breathe into that, you black imp, and I'll scatter your brains all over the coach!"

"What, how, what?"

It was the colonel this time. Madaline drew back into the corner of the coach, but not a sound escaped her lips. The black lowered the whistle as if in obedience. At the same instant a shrill, sharp whistle sounded out through the dismal gorge. With it came the ringing report of a revolver. The youth fired directly upon the negro. He had looked for what came. While presenting a revolver with his right hand the second was ready in the left for use. There came a plunge and a howl of pain, the door flew open and the black rolled out. As the large, doubled-up body left the vehicle it received a second bullet from the youth's weapon.

"The bandits will be upon us! They will answer that signal at once. Quick! to the rocks!"

The coach had stopped. Throwing the opposite door open from where the darky had gone out, the boy led the way to the bank. After going one hundred feet the lad stopped and whispered:

"Keep ahead, be silent, and don't stop until you reach a place of safety."

"But you?" Madaline asked.

"I am going back."

"The negro was one of the bandits, hey?" the colonel asked.

"Yes, and as white as you and I when the burnt cork is off."

"How'd you know it?"

"I watched him. I came because he did."

Madaline began to speak again, but the youth was not there to listen. A little belt of moonlight revealed a figure gliding back toward the wagon road, where the old vehicle stood undisturbed.

CHAPTER II.—Hot Pursuit.

Not many minutes after the mountain coach had left the Blue Globe there was another arrival at the inn. A hard-looking customer he was, too. At the tavern door he hesitated a moment, then pushed the heavy planks back and stepped abruptly in. The Blue Globe stood on a foothill, and so close did the wagon road run to it that the wheels of the coaches, as they arrived, rubbed the step-stone. The structure was low. The building contained four rooms. The barroom was in front, the kitchen and dining-room, as one, at the back, and two bedrooms at the side. The loft was only for storage. Although many firmly believed that the landlord, Chester Ream, familiarly known as "Chet," was in league with the road-agents, yet no one had ever been robbed at the Blue Globe.

"How are you, Chet?"

That was the salutation given by the tough-looking customer who entered the tavern.

"Well's ever," was the laconic reply.

"Stage in and gone, hey?"

"Not long gone, Bruce."

"War Tiger hyar, an' ready?"

"Course he was."

"As a nigger?"

Another nod.

"How many of the hull?"

"Two."

"Men?"

"One man an' a gal."

"Whew, Chet, easy 'nough!"

"There was another what I forgot, but he was empty, only a boy like."

"Come with stage?"

"No; left hyar with Tiger."

"How'd he come?"

"On a hoss."

"Well, what in thunder did he take the stage fer, when he had a hoss to ride?"

"Said the beast had giv' out."

"Tell me, Chet, had the boy blue eyes?"

"Can't say for certain, but he's fine-lookin'. I noticed the gal had mighty fine brown eyes."

"How was the lad dressed?"

"Common like."

"Pistols?"

"Didn't see none."

"Did ye see a little scar jist underneath his chin?"

"I swar, Bruce, I did notice that."

The visitor came to his feet instanter.

"That boy is Rolly Rock!"

The innkeeper brought his great hard fist down upon the bar with loud thuds.

"Rolly Rock!" he echoed. "By thunder, I wish I'd known it."

"Whar's his hoss?"

Ream wagged his head toward the stable. The two men went out together. When the stable door was opened the moonlight fell upon a sleek-looking gelding that was as black as a raven's wing. The animal was quietly munching his provender.

"That hoss ain't tired out no more than me."

"He don't look like it, that's a fact."

"Rolly Rock wanted ter be with the stage folks, that's the hull business out."

"Looks that way, Bruce."

"I've a notion to take that hoss an' foller the stage. That's the idea."

"What foller fur?"

"To look after Tiger."

"If ye take the hoss ye must steal him, ye know."

"I see."

"The integrity of the Blue Globe must be kept up, Bruce."

The confederates exchanged winks. The landlord made his way back to the inn. Bruce proceeded to saddle the boy's horse, and Ream did not glance back. A few minutes later there was the sound of a horse's feet upon the rocky road that passed the Blue Globe.

CHAPTER III.—Snared at Last.

After Colonel Wallace and his daughter had been left by the boy, they crept on up among the rocks. They were mystified as to what had taken place. Particularly were they both querying in their minds as to the object the youth had in aiding them. They found at length a place where they felt that they could tarry for a time in safety. The spot could be reached but by one source, and, if defense should be necessary, the position was as good a one as could be found. In less than half an hour after they had found their adopted retreat, there came a strange sound to their ears. There was a faint rattle and clatter of horses' feet upon the rocky road. The noise came from the direction of Blue Globe inn. It grew louder and louder until it was directly beneath them. There came up, mingled with the steel clatter upon the rocks, the hum of human voices.

The flying steed did not check his pace at the coach. Directly past the scene of the tragedy the animal flew, and on down through Fazelo's Pit. As the sound had come, it receded; fainter and fainter it grew, until it was entirely lost in the distance. The couple looked at each other in blank amazement. Words were useless. They knew it, for neither had any idea what had taken place. Let us see what Rolly Rock knew about it. Well covered by the shadows and foliage of the shrubs that fringed the craggy rocks, the youth descended the slope until he gained a point near the vehicle. He saw, or thought he saw, on the opposite side of the coach moving forms. For some minutes he stood and watched and listened, but heard nothing more.

The coach stood exactly where it had been left, but horses and driver were gone. The boy crept still closer, with the stillness of a cat. When he came to the second halt he made another discovery. The bandit with blackened face was gone also. This confirmed the opinion that he had seen human forms about the vehicle.

"That man never got away by means of his own strength, I know that, for I know how I shot," Rolly soliloquized.

A few minutes passed and Rolly Rock started from his position right suddenly. He heard a sound that elicited his close attention. A horse was coming at a lively gait down the winding, stony road of the gulch.

"That's the dash of Jet's feet or I'm a stick," the lad exclaimed, half aloud.

The sounds came nearer and nearer. Rolly Rock could not stand idly waiting. He hastened

up the road several rods. The pathway here was narrow, walls of rock being on either hand. The youth hastily climbed up the left-hand side, and in a few seconds stood where the coming steed must pass beneath him. Not long had he to wait. A broad belt of moonlight revealed what he had not before been assured of. Jet was ridden by one of Fazelo's men. The boy shook his head at the discovery, and drew a knife with a long, slender blade from beneath his coat. He crept out to the margin and seated himself upon the very edge of the rock.

Rolly Rock had determined to drop down upon horse and rider and, if possible, to gain possession of his pet steed. The horse drew rapidly near. The black form was now discernible in the deep shadow. He had entered the narrow pass. Rolly nerved himself for the downward fling. The moment came for action. When the horse's head was nearly beneath him, the boy loosened his hold and shot downward. Instead of alighting behind the rider, he alighted in front of him. He struck astride the animal's shoulders and dashed the bridle reins out of the bandit's hands. Bruce was astonished, as one naturally would be, and instinctively he grasped the object before him in his great muscular arms.

Rolly was pinioned and helpless. The knife fell from his grasp. Jet was frightened nearly out of his senses, and unrestrained by the reins he plunged away with a fury that only desperation could produce. This was the sound that startled Colonel Wallace and Madaline, as they sat in their hiding place, and this was the sound that they listened to until it died away in the far distance. Colonel Wallace consulted his heavy gold watch frequently, and, when midnight had passed, began to grow a little impatient. In answer to his complaints Madaline replied:

"The young man told us to go to the coach after a while, if it got chilly up here."

"The coach may not be there."

"He said the bandits would not take it, and they certainly will not sit and watch it."

The idea of going down to the stage pleased the colonel. He had not noticed the words of Rolly Rock as closely as had his daughter. The two moved slowly downward. They had now come within sight of the rusty old vehicle. It stood there grim and lone, in the pale moonlight. After watching the spot for a little time the couple advanced. The colonel opened the coach door cautiously, a revolver held in his right hand. The old stage proved to be empty. The two valises had not been disturbed. They felt assured of safety and entered. The coach doors were closed.

Each took a broad, well-cushioned seat for a resting-place, and, being weary, soon fell into sound sleep. An hour or two passed without interruption. At length Madaline was awakened. She could not tell what disturbed her, but her eyes flew open as a peculiar sound fell upon her ear. The girl reached over and grasped her father's hand. The colonel instantly arose to a sitting posture.

"Someone has come!" Madaline whispered.

"The boy?"

"I do not know. I heard a grating sound on the door and the tread of feet."

"The driver, perhaps."

The two listened. The noise was now at the

front of the coach. Colonel Wallace gazed out of the little window at the driver's seat.

"Someone is hitching on the horses, Madaline."

"Good! it's the driver returned."

"He's multiplied rapidly if that's the case. There are half a dozen."

"The bandits, then?"

"Must be."

"Let us escape; they don't know we are here."

Madaline caught the iron handle, but it did not yield to her strength. The colonel tried both sides.

"We are prisoners as sure as fate," he exclaimed, in an excited tone. He was right.

The doors were securely fastened on the outside. Half a minute more and the coach started with reckless speed down into Fazelo's Pit.

CHAPTER IV.—The Bandit's Home.

Nestled in the mountains, a good half-score of miles from Fazelo's Pit, is Extonville. There are hardly enough houses in the place to denominate it a town. What buildings there are, however, represent a moderate degree of wealth. One house in the central part of the mountain hamlet is different from all the others, as well as more costly. It is built entirely of cobble-head stones, averaging about the size of a cocoanut, thoroughly cemented together. The owner and occupant at the same time of which we write was Fernando Howard. He was said to be a speculator and very wealthy.

Mrs. Howard was the most beautiful woman in the hamlet. She was not more than twenty-two years of age, and had been married less than a year. Fernando brought her there one day when returning from an Eastern trip. No one knew who she was before marriage, or where she came from. Fernando was a widower when the union was made. He was at least a man of forty, yet his proud face would not place his years at more than thirty or thirty-five. A boy was the fruit of the first marriage. He was a youth of uncommon fine development and intelligence, a favorite at Extonville, as well as the pride of the new wife. Twenty-four hours before the events transpired which were narrated in the foregoing chapters, Mrs. Howard held a private interview with her son. When they were alone in the little parlor the lady said:

"Rolly, it seems imperative that you go to Giacomo Pass again."

"I am ready to do your bidding, mother."

"I always am assured of that in advance, Rolly, but the mission is a hazardous one."

"Why?"

"Before you have gone to make discoveries to gratify my curiosity; this time it is to protect my friends."

"Your friends?"

"More than friends, Rolly. My father and sister, Madaline, are coming here, and they will have to pass through Fazelo's Pit."

"And you are afraid that father—"

"Sh—! Rolly, don't allow your tongue to get the better of you. It is the bandits I fear."

"I will be guarded, mother."

"My father, Colonel Wallace, has the air of wealth about him, and an effort to disguise the

peculiarity would be a failure. He is just such a party as the bandit spies are on the alert for, and they will be sure to rob him."

Rolly smiled.

"But when Fazelo finds who the intended victim is will he not allow your father and sister to pass unmolested?"

"The bandit chief may not see them at all, and I hope to heaven he may not, for death will be certain to one or both."

"He hates them, then?"

"With a hatred that calls for the blood of the heart, Rolly."

"Hates your sister Madaline, as well as the colonel?"

"None the less so."

"Why both so bitterly?"

"Because of his wicked, revengeful nature."

"He has been opposed some time by them?"

"I will tell you, Rolly. I had resolved not to trouble your brain with the affair, but now you had better know."

"Both father and Madaline read Fernando Howard better than myself. They saw in him an undercurrent of villainy that I could not and would not recognize."

"Fifty thousand had been settled upon me when I became of age, and I did not know that it was my fortune your father loved instead of myself. It proved to be so."

"My father warned me, and drove Fernando from his house, and after our marriage took full control of the fifty thousand again, leaving me as poor as a peasant girl."

"How could your father take your own from you, and you of age?" the boy put in.

Simply because no papers had been made; he gave me the amount of money, which I placed back in his hands for safekeeping. He holds it for me, but says not a dollar of it shall I have so long as I am the wife of Fernando Howard."

"Does he know that that man and Captain Fazelo are one and the same?"

"No such idea at all."

The interview continued for an hour. Mother and son entered fully into each other's confidence. The next afternoon Jet, a pet horse belonging to Rolly, was taken from the barn at the rear of the stone house, and the boy rode away down the mountain path toward Fazelo's Pit. Rolly had never met his grandfather, Colonel Wallace, or Miss Madaline. But as soon as the overland coach drew up in front of Chester Ream's little wayside inn, the boy knew he had struck the right party. He had never been at Blue Globe before, so he took no precautions against being recognized. Some of the bandits had met him on former occasions, and had every reason to remember him.

Rolly, in self-defense, had killed two men and wounded a third. Traps that had been set for him had been sprung without capturing the game. Once when meeting a bandit he had given his name as Rolly Rock, and not long after that it became a terror in the mountain gorge among the bandits. The boy had made his visits to the pass to discover what he could concerning his father. After becoming satisfied who Fazelo was, he wished to ferret out the bandit's retreat and break up the gang. Fazelo once caught a glimpse of the boy's face, and he believed the little thun-

derbolt to be his own son. The captain became anxious.

"If Rolly knew his identity, would not his wife know it also?"

That was the question the chief asked himself, and he also gave an affirmative answer. The concern of Fazelo respecting the boy terror was mistaken by the bandits as a dread of the little fellow, and the commander's fear did not stimulate the men to any considerable extent, as may be imagined. The captain gave strict orders not to kill Rolly Rock under any circumstances, but to take the boy alive and hold him until he (the captain) could see the lad. Every man resolved to make the effort, but the vow was qualified by certain other resolutions not to run too much risk. Thus matters stood on the night when the two travelers were driven into Fazelo's Pit, closely locked within the lumbering old coach, and at the time when Rolly Rock, clasped in the arms of the strong bandit on the back of Jet, plunged down into the dark and winding gorge.

CHAPTER V.—In a Bad Fix.

Rolly was never more astonished in his life than when he found what a situation he had put himself into. Bruce had him sure. The boy's arms were pinioned at his side. He was completely helpless. Jet was frenzied and uncontrolled. He plunged with maddened fury down through the rough and darkened gorge. At first the bandit was fearfully startled. The landing of the lad upon the horse's shoulders and neck nearly took his breath away. As soon as he could gather his thoughts he came to the conclusion that it was Rolly Rock he had intuitively thrown his arms around, for no other human being would attempt such a thing for the mere possession of a horse.

"I have you now, you young fiend!" the bandit growled soon after they had started on the mad ride.

"See to it that you keep me," Rolly answered, with a low laugh.

Bruce thought of the thousand dollars' reward. He had a notion to slide from the horse and risk the physical injury. The boy, of course, would be taken with him. The reins could not be obtained without loosening his hold of the boy. Such a thing would never do. He finally concluded to try a deception dodge. The position was growing more and more alarming.

"Can yer stop that infernal hoss, me lad?"

"Yes," was the cool answer.

"I'll let ye go if ye'll stop ther blasted critter."

"But I shan't let you go if Jet does stop."

"What ye say, shan't let me go? Why, blast yer eyes, ye hain't got me, but I've got you."

With the boy's last remark there came a sudden explosion. Following the explosion a howl of pain from Bruce, followed by a storm of oaths. Rolly, with his arms pinioned at his side, had worked his right hand on to the handle of his revolver. Soon the weapon was cocked and turned backward. Just when Bruce was the most certain and defiant he received a bullet in the hip. The second detonation rang out in the dark gorge and Bruce, with his arms still locked about the lad, fell to the earth. He struck like a log upon

the rocky road, and Rolly upon the stalwart body. Jet sped on. The bandit loosened his hold upon the youth as he struck. Rolly was upon his feet in an instant, uninjured.

He lighted a match and his suspicions were fully confirmed. Bruce lay as one dead. Taking a pencil and card from his pocket, he lighted another match and wrote his name in large letters upon the bit of pasteboard, and pinned the same to the lapel of the defeated bandit's coat. Just as the flame upon the bit of pine was dying out, Rolly started quickly. There came the crack of a heavy revolver close at hand. The boy felt a tingling sensation at the lobes of the ear. A bullet had come close enough to his head to scarify the skin. A leap that would have done credit to a professional athlete carried him several feet away from the inanimate Bruce. His own pistol-shot had drawn someone to the spot. The lighted match had made the aim of the newcomer quite accurate.

There were but two directions open to boy. On the north and south sides were solid rocks. On the east and west, the roadway through the gorge. After getting out of the immediate vicinity of the body of Bruce, Rolly stopped and listened. He heard what would have made one less courageous tremble in his boots. There were whisperings on either hand, and the tread of heavy feet. The next instant the glow of a bull's-eye lantern flashed across the narrow place.

"In for it, by jocks!" Rolly exclaimed, half aloud.

He hastily supplied the two empty chambers of his revolver with cartridges. Rolly knew not which way to turn. A wall of rock at his back, a wall in front, and armed men drawing in from each side.

"Don't let him get away!" came a voice from near where Rolly had been when fired upon.

"He's killed Bruce," the voice continued. "I seen the dead body and the man what did it."

There was a coarse murmur of oaths. Then gruff voices swore vengeance on the slayer of their beloved companion. From another gleam of the bull's-eye the boy saw that the roadway was completely hedged by the outlaws. He had not yet been discovered. Should the ray of light fall upon himself a dozen bullets would penetrate his body in an instant.

There was no time to be lost. Feeling of the wall at his back, Rolly's hand came upon a little projection that afforded him a hold. Slipping his revolver back into place he quickly drew himself up. Unfortunately the shelf was not broad enough to give him a resting-place. He felt higher up, but the surface was nearly smooth.

The position he occupied could not long be retained. It was with the greatest difficulty that he could hold on for a single second. His right hand moved rapidly—indeed, spasmodically. Disappointment swent over the boy's face. This was followed by a glow of hope.

His hand came in contact with a small shrub that was rooted in a mould-filled seam of the great wall. He grasped it and drew himself up until both feet were upon the narrow shelf. A bit of loosened stone was dislodged. The piece went rattling down to the rocks below. In an instant the bull's-eye was turned upward, and a dozen revolvers were leveled upon the boy.

CHAPTER VI.—A Sudden Interruption.

The driver of the stage coach, when the whistle of Tiger rang out, followed by the pistol shot, brought the horses to a stop instantly. He knew very well what that signal meant. Leaping from the seat he detached the horses at once. They were led away with as little noise as possible.

The lord of the lines had scarcely reached a point fifty feet distant when a dozen dusky objects appeared in the vicinity of the abandoned vehicle. They were a little cautious, not knowing what had occasioned the firing. The advance was soon made, however, and whispered curses were uttered at finding the stage empty. The next moment they were repeated with increased emphasis at finding the body of Tiger.

Four men caught him up and bore the fellow away. There was no use looking for the escaped travelers in the darkness. So the leader thought. Accordingly, a watch was placed over the vehicle. One-half of the party went away with the mimic negro, while the others, save the coach-guard, were detailed to hunt up the horses which had suddenly disappeared.

In less than three minutes after the appearance of the road-agents at the coach, not one was to be seen in the vicinity, and the place was as silent as if not a human being was near. Four men made it their business to look after the horses. Jack Runnels, the driver, separated the animals as soon as he had got safely away. Jack succeeded in evading the road-agents, for a time. At length he reached as high an altitude as the horses could go.

Hitching them, he moved back down the path, so as to guard the animals in case they were trailed to their present position. Hearing nothing of the bandits he descended further. The second time he paused his ear had been arrested by a strange sound. It was that of the running horse which Bruce and Rolly Rock bestrode.

Jack strained his eyes in wonder. He had a glimpse of a flying object beneath him, and that was all. It passed away, and not long after that silence prevailed. Moving on down, he beheld the old coach standing as he had left it. As he neared the vehicle he was startled by a low whisper.

"Who's there?" Jack asked in a low tone.

"Come here," was the reply, in an audible whisper.

"Are you Mr. Wallace?"

"Yes."

"Come out, then; it's all right."

"Who are you?"

"Jack, the driver."

"Come nearer so that we can see you," was the request from the shadow.

"Come yourself; if you're Colonel Wallace, your daughter is with you.

A silence for a moment followed. Just as he was about to repeat his request, a step close at hand startled him. Jack turned suddenly. Two stout men seized him, one on either side, and a gag was instantly thrust into his mouth. He was disarmed in a trice and his hands lashed together.

"Now, my darling, lead us to the hosses," a gruff voice said in his ear.

Jack shook his head.

"No, hey? Well, we'll see."

Just then two other men appeared. Jack knew very well what material he had to butt against. He concluded to take no more chances. The horses were not his, he was only employed as a driver, and he thought more of his life than the stage company's property. The worst feature of the affair was to be obliged to submit to the demands of a murderous posse of outlaws.

A bit of large cord, with a noose at one end, was slipped over Jack's hands, and the spokesman, holding the other end wound about his hand, motioned the driver to lead the way. Jack obeyed promptly. He led them up the mountainside to where the horses were tied. The bandits chuckled over their success. Jack was helpless, and he made no effort to escape.

"Now that you have shown us the critters we want, ye can take it easy. We will leave ye hyar, an' pay ye a visit ag'in in the mornin'."

Jack was placed in a sitting position, with his back against a small sapling. His hands were then loosened, carried back and around the sapling and lashed together again. This pinned him to the spot. The horses were led away. Jack was left in a painful situation. Then animals were led only part way down, when one of the guards of the stage met the two men.

"Hist!" he exclaimed. "The old man and the gal have gone inter the wagon."

"Lucky, by Jupiter."

After a short consultation it was decided to allow the couple time to get to sleep, then to lock them in and take them away. The men managed the locking of the coach doors and taking the vehicle away, as the reader knows. It was trundled down through the same dark and winding way that Jet had passed over a few hours before. At length the vehicle was brought to a standstill. There was a hum of additional voices. Colonel Wallace and Madaline felt that the tragic moment had come.

There was a grating at the stage door. The fastenings had been removed. The girl caught the arm of her father, and drew close to him in breathless suspense. The big door was dashed suddenly back. The bright glow of a lantern suddenly illuminated the interior of the vehicle, and at the same time revealed a brace of heavy revolvers in the hands of a masked man.

"Fire and fury, it's the old man himself!" he hissed.

The words were not uttered loud enough for any one to understand them. He hesitated a little at the recognition. The unexpected meeting was a surprise, but nothing compared with what followed. Just as he began to give orders to his men there came an explosion. A shriek of mortal agony followed. The outlaw who occupied the driver's seat swayed a moment, then rolled from his position over the front wheel to the rocky road in the throes of death.

CHAPTER VII.—Uneven Chances.

Rolly Rock never found a position in which he was too much alarmed to act. This was, perhaps, the tightest fix her had ever been in. Scarcely had the glow of the lantern swept across his

body before his left hand held his revolver. The weapon was leveled instantaneously. A loud report rang out. With the detonation came a crash and a howl of rage. The bull's-eye had been shattered and the light extinguished. The bearer of the lantern was wounded also. The action of the men was checked for half a minute.

"Why don't you shoot the fiend?" the injured bandit exclaimed, with a terrible oath closing the sentence.

"Perforate him!" yelled another, at the same time firing his pistol at the spot where they had seen the enemy.

Half a score of shots almost instantly followed. The bandits expected to hear the body of the intended victim some tumbling down. As soon as Rolly had fired he swung himself to the left and caught a drooping vine that the light had revealed an instant before. It proved strong enough to hold his weight. It would not do to drop downwarn, so he began the work of climbing up.

The great wall was uneven and afforded him foothold. Two minutes after the volley had been fired Rolly was ten feet above his first resting-place. Meantime the outlaws were active. Matches were plenty and a little fire soon kindled. While this was being done the greater number of the party stood with revolvers in hand ready to act if any indications came from above pointing out the locality of the escaped unknown. Their purpose was not robbery of course. One of their men had fallen at the hand of some one and that individual must suffer the consequences. Vengeance was the cry.

"Hurry up the fire," was the command as soon as the dry substance began to burn.

"Keep out of the light," put in the second; "that cuss up thar will pepper ye if ye don't"

"Let him jerk his popgun once and we'll riddle him!" exclaimed another.

Just then a figure moved up to the blaze. It was one of the highwaymen. He had a bleeding hand down to the light. There was a frightful wound at the base of the thumb. He was the one who had carried the bull's-eye lantern.

"A hard one, Dave."

The wounded man turned to his pal.

"I'll have the life of the man who did that, if I follow him around the world."

Scarcely had the words fallen from his lips when Dave sank down senseless, with a moan. No pistol shot rang out this time. There had come a thud, and the man sank lifeless to the earth. A stone, that would weigh five of six pounds, rolled to the feet of the man who stood beside the lantern-bearer.

The fragment of rock had come with terrific force from some point above. The vanquished Dave was instantly seized upon by his friends and dragged more than carried out into the darkness. The light that they had started had proved to be a damage instead of a benefit. Not a man approached it again. Instead of that, substances were thrown from a distance to crush it out. Soon the pit was dark again.

"What fools we be!" a ruffian growled.

"What's the matter now?" came the return.

"Torches, them's what we want. A dozen torches, an' every man flamin' one."

In five minutes' time the flaming brands were in preparation. Dry, woody substances, anything that would burn, was collected. The improvised torches were not durable, but might answer the purpose. Soon all was ready—ten flaming fagots were in hand. The party started for the base of the wall they wished to illuminate.

But a few steps had been taken when there came an expression of alarm. All stopped instant. One of the men had stopped and was bending over the body of Bruce. He took the card that had been pinned to the bandit's coat and held it up between thumb and finger.

"Rolly Rock!" he cried. "It is that wildcat who has done all tih's!"

The name went the rounds. A consultation was held. Different methods of action were suggested. It was not believed that the boy could escape. They felt certain that the only way to leave the rock would be by descent. While the bandits had been busy with their planning below, Rolly Rock had not been idle in his efforts to escape. He worked his way upward a little, and to the right considerably.

CHAPTER VIII.—Making A Stand.

Inch by inch the boy felt his way. As before, his moving to the right had bettered his chances, so it did this time. Rolly could hear the hum of gruff voices below. Evidently the road-agents were disappointed. The looked-for descent did not take place. Rolly heard his name repeated.

He heard oaths follow the mention of it. This stimulated him to renewed effort, but at the same time extreme caution was continuously exercised. After making the first ten feet the dangerous point was passed. Still more sloping and rough the great wall became. Clambering nimbly upward, Rolly reached the top. He was out of peril now.

"Let the outlaws watch me," he said, smiling. "I will appear to them again from a quarter they little suspect."

Passing over the ridge that lay at his left he hoped to be able to go down to the narrow cut again, but met with a disappointment. The wall there was almost perpendicular. He was in the moonlight and saw nothing but obstacles before him. Hours of time were consumed before he reached the gorge where the coach stood. A long journey had to be made in a roundabout course.

The first thing that attracted Rolly's attention when reaching the wood was the hum of human voices. He drew stealthily near. The bandits had Jack, the driver, and were forcing him to tell where the horses were secreted. The force was too great for Rolly to attack. He concluded to keep himself on the alert and strike at the most favorable time. The boy followed the party to where the animals were secured, and as soon as the road-agents had left Jack, Rolly advanced, telling quickly who he was.

With one stroke of the boy's knife the cords were cut which held the driver to the tree. Jack was upon his feet in short order. He pulled the gag out of his mouth and then caught his deliverer by the hand and shook it vigorously.

"You are a brick, boy. I thought I was in for it, sure."

"It did look that way," Rolly answered, "but now you are out of it, sure, let us follow the outlaws, who have gone below. Those fellows need watching."

Runnels did not hesitate to act. They were soon near where the bandits had stopped with the horses. The two watchers lapsed into silence. They heard the news that Colonel Wallace and Madaline had entered the coach. Rolly's first thought was to steal around to the coach and get them out again. The second, that it would not be a safe thing to undertake. The coach stood in the strong light of the moon.

"We will watch and wait," the boy said, in a whisper to his companion.

An hour passed and action began.

"They have locked the doors and hitched on the horses," the youth remarked, arising to his feet. "They will go into Fazelo's Pit; let us be moving."

Without waiting for reply, Rolly started across the foothill to reach the road in advance of the stage. At length he halted and drew into a niche in the wall.

"It will not be safe to go further now; just ahead are half a score of the bandits on the alert."

"How do you know?" Jack asked. "It's as dark as Tophet here. I can't see 'em."

"They are there, watching for me, but never mind, here comes the coach."

The mountain-wagon came trundling along, four men following in the wake. The party in the pit had been reinforced by two more, Fazelo and his body companions, and they stood ready to make an attack upon the passengers. Action was prompt. The captain met with an astonishment, as the reader knows. Jack fired the shot at the driver and did fatal work.

He insisted on doing so, as the outlaw was occupying a position that belong to himself individually. By agreement, Jack leaped to the seat so suddenly vacated, and, gathering up the lines, started the horses away at a dead run. The vehicle was scarcely under way before a second form leaped from the side of the roadway upon the trunk-rack at the rear of the coach.

It was Rolly Rock. Jack knew the road over which he was moving very well, but that knowledge was not very assuring. He was obliged to hold the horses in—indeed, to bring them down to a slow trot. The outlaws soon regained their senses. The coach had not gone far before the captain commanded pursuit. To a man they started on a dead run. The bull's eyes which Fazelo's right-hand man carried afforded them a means of security. He was at the front, and the lantern's glow showed them where to stop and enabled them to avoid side projections.

Rolly saw the light flash here and there. For an instant it appeared and then was lost again. He knew very well that the road-agents would soon overtake the stage. A few raps on the rear glass of the vehicle brought out the voice of the colonel.

"Who's there?" he asked, anxiously.

Wallace knew some change had taken place. Rolly told who he was. Then the voice of Madaline was heard. Mingled with her own were the compliments of the Colonel. The youth did not stop to listen to these. Springing to the top, he crept

across the stage to the side of Jack. Just then there came the trampling of horses' feet in advance of them. Rolly thought of Jet, who had escaped. But there were beatings of the hoofs of more than one animal. Suddenly the vehicle was stopped. Then a voice cried out:

"Stand or we fire!"

It was the voice of a woman.

CHAPTER IX.—The Bandit's Wife.

The day at Extonville wore away slowly. Mrs. Howard was anxious regarding her father and sister. She was also anxious about Rolly. When darkness came Mrs. Howard began looking for the stage. Nine o'clock came and still not coach from Gladbast.

As she sat by the window looking out upon the mountain road, revealed by a reflecting lantern at the corner of the Extonville House, a servant, the only one employed in the family, entered the room.

"Julia," the lady said, "that stage has not come yet."

"And is it late?"

"I suppose not, but to-night I am especially interested and anxious, you know."

"It's a dangerous trip for one with money, Mrs. Howard."

"Rolly has gone, as you know, to aid the passengers. I have implicit confidence in the boy's ability."

"Well you might, Mrs. Howard; he is a singular combination of the lion and the lamb."

For an hour the two talked and prophesied concerning the safety of the expected party.

At length both started to their feet and sprang to the window. There was a clatter of iron shoes upon the road. As they peered out a black steed at a brisk trot came around the corner inn toward the cobble-stone house. It was Jet, and riderless.

"Something has befallen Rolly," Mrs. Howard said, with an effort.

"I fear it is so," the servant answered sympathetically.

A lantern was lighted and the two women went out. The hope that had been built up was suddenly banished. Jet was covered with foam, dried in places to a crust.

"The horse has had a long and terrible race," Julia said, as soon as she turned the lantern upon the steed.

"He never would exercise himself like that without fright," the mistress added. "Rolly did not turn Jet loose."

In a fever of excitement Mrs. Howard had the weary horse stabled. Visions of the most terrible nature arose before her mind, and when she returned to the house she could do naught but walk the floor and peer from the windows at every turn about the room. Hour after hour wore away, and still the lady had not quieted her mind. Julia remained with her. They continued their speculations concerning the fate of the travelers, but no course of reasoning brought any comfort.

"I'm going to the pit!" the mistress suddenly explained, an hour after midnight.

"And what can you do there?"

"I can find out what the matter—what has become of father and Madaline."

"Light the lantern again, Julia," she added, so hurriedly that the girl did not notice her agitation. While the maid was preparing the light the mistress went to a cupboard and took therefrom a brace of revolvers.

"Are there any more pistols, Mrs. Howard?"

"Two are enough—why?"

"I am going with you."

"I had wished it, but would not suggest such a trip, for you are not interested as I am."

"I am interested in you enough not to allow you to go alone."

There were no more revolvers, but the lady gave Julia one of the brace. There was a mate to Jet in the barn. Rolly's horse had rested and eaten his mess, and was in renewed condition. The two animals were saddled in short order, and the two females rode out of Extonville without disturbing any one of the villagers. They talked to encourage each other as a boy whistles to keep his courage up. After the first half hour progress was very slow. At times they could scarcely tell whether they were in the right path or not.

For miles not a sound or sight was there to indicate the presence of a human being. The first observation that they made that gave evidence of having reached the pit was the blow, or rather, the sudden appearance and disappearance of a small light. Intuitively the two drew in their horses to a standstill. Both of the equestrians saw the light at the same instant, for both were on the alert and all their senses were keyed up to the highest pitch. They were very near the coach when the steeds were stopped. Mrs. Howard believed she had met the bandits, with the stage under their control. Hardly knowing what she did, her revolver was drawn and she cried out:

"Stand or we fire!"

Jack lifted his revolver as the words rang out, and Rolly forced it down. He recognized the voice.

"Mother!" the boy exclaimed, in quick reply.

"Rolly, are you safe—are the others safe?" came to him, anxiously.

"All here and unharmed so far, but the bandits are close upon us."

"Is the captain with them?"

"He leads the gang."

A few whispered words to Julia and Mrs. Howard rode past the coach alone and stationed Jet in the center of the wagon path. Just then the bandits came up.

"Ho! what have we here?" one of the outlaws asked, as he caught sight of the horse.

"One you must not attempt to pass!" came the stern reply.

"Whew! a woman!" put in the lantern-bearer, casting a flash of light across the flowing skirts of the rider.

The men did not heed the horsewoman. They pressed on toward the coach. Rolly told the driver not to offer any resistance, and, swinging himself down, he told Colonel Wallace the same. The bandits surrounded the stage in obedience to the command of Fazelo. The captain had heard the words from the horsewoman and, going to the light-bearer, he took the lantern and turned it upon the face of the rider.

He started as if touched by a brand of fire. A low whistle fell from his lips, and every man came to him instantaneously. The light was turned away from the lady. Fazelo left the spot, followed by his gang. All wondered, but none questioned. The footsteps of the retreating men soon died away in the distance. The carriage party was left to its friends.

When Colonel Wallace and Madaline learned who had so suddenly appeared to save them, and who the boy defender was, their astonishment and delight were beyond description. When the sun rose and shone upon Extonville, the next morning, the whole stage party save Jack, the driver, were safely ensconced at the cobble-stone house of Fernando Howard.

CHAPTER X.—New Plans.

Were this entirely a story of fiction we would doubtless describe the retreat of the bandits as a golden realm of the mountains, but due respect for the truth compels the denial of any such place in the Giacomo Pass. There was no cave to go to. To be sure a spot had been found for the deposit of certain treasures, but the bandits were men having other avocations, to all appearances, and residing in different places. Captain Fazelo and one other had homes at Extonville. Five claimed to be explorers, and boarded at the Blue Globe, and this inn was more properly the headquarters of the road-agents than any other place.

Of course, Fazelo learned that Rolly was there that very night. He was aware of the way Tiger was thwarted, of the shooting of Bruce, of the death of Dave, the lantern-bearer, at the rock, and then of the death-wound the volunteer driver had received. Four men had fallen at this visit of the little terror, and a dozen men had not been able to capture him.

Something must be done to prevent Rolly Rock coming here again. Thus the bandit chief reflected and resolved. In a little cut through the mountains that led off from the dark part of the wagon road, denominated Fazelo's Pit, was a peculiar spot. It was exceedingly romantic.

Rocks were broken down and piled up in profusion, and at one side of the great heap there was an immense shelf of stone, which gave shelter to many square yards below. The place, by the addition of a little manual labor, was converted into a sort of temporary retreat for the bandits. Here they could sit in comparative comfort, even if the weather was inclement, and await the coming of their victims.

To this spot the defeated Tiger and no less fortunate Bruce were taken. Dave and the bandit driver were buried with but little ceremony. The first two were not dead, and yet they were but little better off. Tiger had received two bullets in the shoulder and chest, while Bruce had one in the hip and another which fractured one of the floating ribs. Captain Fazelo looked at the wounded men a while in silence the morning after leaving the coach so suddenly.

"This will never do," he said to himself at length. "That boy must be taken East. I must go home and send him to New York to be educated."

Then the thought came to him of Colonel Wal-

lace and Madaline being there. The bandit chief paced up and down the rocky retreat in an agitated manner. Plans slowly developed, and then he called his men together for a conference.

"These two men," he said, pointing to Bruce and Tiger, "must go to the Blue Globe to-day. They are honest men, of course, and were wounded in attempting to protect some passengers who were attacked by robbers. They will die in such a place as this.

"I must leave the pass for a few days, but before I go there is a nice-paying job for you to do. My house must be entered at night, the old man put out of the way, the money secured and the girl kidnapped."

"The gal brought hyar?" one asked.

Fazelo could not help smiling at the absurdity of the question.

"No, not here, but taken to the Crows."

"How's the thing to be did, cap?"

"I will give you full instructions before starting. I want you to meet me here again just as darkness settles."

"We'll be on hand, cap, but how about the spoils? Ye begun about a nice thing fer us."

"I forgot that part. The old man has a big pile of money, I have every reason to believe, and, of course, you all come in for a share of that when it is secured. For evidence of the death of the old coon I will pay a cool thousand, and when the girl is placed in the hands of Leather Tongue, another thousand."

"Good enough, cap; the thing will be did in good shape—hey, boys?"

When the shadows of night fell again the men met, as agreed, at the rocky nook.

Captain Fazelo submitted his plans for operation.

"I am not to go with you," he said. "It will not do for me to have a hand in the affair, as I am known, when out of my disguise, to all there. Something might happen to reveal my identity. You are all strangers.

"At two in the morning enter by means of this key. The old man you will almost certainly find in a bedroom just back of the parlor; the last door in the hall leads into it. Make a dead sure thing of him. The girl you will find in the front bedroom, upstairs. Chloroform her and carry her away. A horse will be found in the barn for that purpose. My wife sleeps in a rear bedroom and our boy in one adjoining. Chloroform them thoroughly, then search the house for the old man's money. It will doubtless be in gold. But mind you, men, don't meddle with anything beyond this."

At the cobble-stone house in Extonville the day passed happily, and night came with a feeling of security. Colonel Wallace had not yet broached the subject that he had visited his daughter to talk over. He was half inclined to believe that Fernando was in some way connected with the bandits, and Madaline was of the same opinion. Why Rolly and his mother had appeared was natural; they were anxious to secure the safety of their kindred. Why the attack was so suddenly discontinued was something of a mystery. No one attempted to explain.

Having been broken of rest, the household retired early. By eleven o'clock the house was dark and silent.

More than this, all were asleep. About this time a human figure that had been lurking near moved away in the direction of a cliff, which threw a heavy shadow over a small cluster of low boughed trees at its base. Two hours later six more men came out of the dark retreat, and, by different routes, made their way to the cobble-stone house. One entered the little barn, and a few moments later led out a horse. The work was done without noticeable noise. The animal was made to take one step at a time, with half a minute interval. The steed was saddled and bridled for use. After a short delay to make certain that no one at the house had been disturbed, the bandits advanced. The door readily yielded to the passkey, and they were in the hall ready for fiendish work.

CHAPTER XI.—Fazelo Nonplussed.

All unconscious of the invasion, the inmates of the cobblestone house slept on. With bottles of chloroform and sponges the men scattered to the different rooms as they had been directed by Fazelo. Stealthily approaching the beds, the anesthetic was applied, and the sleep of the victims sunken into an abnormal condition that made them insensible to sound or pain. The men acted promptly and with complete success. The room in which the girl was to be found was entered by two men. The bed was empty and undisturbed! The moonlight soon revealed the truth. A young, womanish figure sat by the window in a large armchair, sleeping soundly.

Nothing could be more favorable. She was to be taken to the Indian encampment. Five minutes later she was borne from the house. A handkerchief covered her face, and the perfume of the anesthetic arose strongly. Then came the clatter of horses' feet down the mountain road. Held upon the steed by the strong arms of an outlaw, the woman was carried on, mile after mile, until the goal was reached. Shortly after the departure of the desperado for the Crow encampment the other members of the gang left the house.

Four of them bore the form of Colonel Wallace while the fifth stooped under the weight of a bag of gold. Rolly and the remaining lady were left in mental oblivion. The four men, keeping out of the strong moonlight, carried their burden toward a river that cut down through the mountains, not far distant. At length they reached the bank, where a little boat was moored. The men laid their burden down and gazed inquiringly at each other.

"Well, how'll we fix him?" asked one.

"I don't want his blood on me," a second answered.

"Them white hairs kinder take the tuck out of me," the third remarked.

"No need of blood," the fourth put in. "Chloroform is a deadshot of itself, if a feller only gits enough. Let's not use the knife, but set the old rat afloat with enough of the stinkin' stuff on his face to keep 'im from wakin' up ag'in. He'll slide off easy that way, ye know."

The method was readily adopted. It was bloodless and yet as fatal as the knife. Laying the inanimate form in the little boat, they poured the whole remaining contents of the bottle upon the

sponge and laid it upon the still, while lips, where it would be likely to remain for a long time.

The small craft was then pushed out into the current, and watched in the moonlight until it had passed beyond human view. All were now ready to depart.

Taking turns at carrying the precious treasure, the road-agents wended their way back to Fazelo's Pit. The bandit chief was highly delighted with what had been accomplished. Colonel Wallace was out of the way. Madaline was where she could not influence his wife; the fifty thousand in gold was secured. Now he would pay Extonville a visit, hear the news of the robbery with astonishment, and set to work to detect the villains—that is, profess to.

Rolly he would send East to be educated, and then his work would be carried on without the annoyances of the past. He was told how the old man was set afloat. Death would be a certainty in the mountain stream, even if the anesthetic did not do the fatal work. The bandit who had gone with the girl to the Crows had not yet come back. Night came and passed, and still no return. Fazelo grew impatient. It would not take more than twelve hours to go and come. It could not be that the outlaw had become enamoured at Madaline and fled with her as his own captive. Fazelo had too much confidence in the man to believe this, and yet the thought came to him more than once. Too impatient to endure the thing longer, he sent two trustworthy men to the Indian town to see what had become of the absent Terrill.

Double the time passed for his messengers to do his errand, and they were still absent.

"Something seems to have gone wrong," he said to Chester Ream. "Three men have gone to the Crow camp and not one returned."

"Perhaps the Injuns went fer 'em," the landlord answered.

"Leather Tongue would not allow such a thing; he is a friend of mine."

"Treacherous cusses, cap, they be, sartin."

After all, what had he to worry about? Fazelo determined to go to Extonville at once. He must see how the land lay there. Dressed in the garb of a business man, he took a good horse from the inn stable and departed. Arriving at his own house, he gently rapped at the door, instead of entering abruptly. It was promptly opened by Julia.

"Oh, Mr. Howard, have you heard the news?" the girl exclaimed, in an excited way, as soon as the man crossed the threshold.

"Yes, I heard something of your trouble at the tavern in the mountains where we stopped. It is bad, Julia."

"Terrible!"

Fazelo passed into the parlor. He was about to ask for his wife when he heard footsteps in the back hall.

Fazelo started forward to greet her, then, with an exclamation of astonishment, started back. It was Madaline who faced him.

"You here? Why, how—I do not understand this."

"It is plain enough. I came by stage from Glad-bast."

"But my wife, Belle, where is she?"

"We do not know."

"Has she gone?"

"Been gone a week. She was kidnapped by night."

"Perdition!" the man fairly yelled. "The infernal stupid fools! Who did it?"

"We know not."

"What else did the villains do?"

"They carried father away, too, using chloroform plentifully. We awoke in the morning to a sad surprise, and to find the house full of a sickening fume."

"What was the object, Miss Wallace?"

"It could not be for the sole purpose of robbery, for they could have taken the gold as well without."

"Then your father was robbed?"

"No, not he. His money is all in a New York draft; they carried away your own money, Mr. Howard."

Here was the second thunderbolt for the bandit.

The bandit rubbed his forehead vigorously. He had beaten himself. His money had been divided among the mountain thieves, and he need not look for any return. Belle, instead of Madaline, was taken away by Terrill, and that man was nowhere to be found.

"Where is the boy, Rolly?" he asked, after a few brisk passages across the room.

"He has been four days absent."

"Where gone?"

"To the mountains."

"How did he go?"

"On the back of Jet; the burglars took away Tom."

Here was another poser. Fernando Howard was nonplussed. Not one thing that he had designed had been carried out, save the putting of Colonel Wallace out of the way.

Unceremoniously he quitted the house and the town.

CHAPTER XII.—The Hairy Hermit.

Never in the course of human events was a boy more astonished than Rolly Howard on awaking that eventful morning and finding the house burglarized and his mother and grandfather missing.

He could come to but one conclusion, and that was that the bandits were at the bottom of the deed. After a short conference with Madaline, Rolly decided to take to the mountains in quest of the absent ones.

"You may pack a good supply of provisions," he said to Julia, "for I may be absent several days."

While the maid did as bidden, Rolly put Jet in rig for use. He was glad that the thieves had taken the mate of his favorite instead of Jet. The bandit had taken the horse nearest the door. The sun was not far up when the young mountain terror was dashing at a high rate of speed down the rocky road which ran through Giacomo Pass. Six or more miles had been passed when Jet was drawn in and brought to a standstill. A peculiar object for such a place had met the boy's eye. Something white was fluttering upon a bush half a dozen rods to the right. Guiding Jet to the spot where the white object was located, he grasped it in his hand. It proved to be a linen handkerchief with lace edge. In one corner were raised letters of white silk forming the word Belle,

"Mother has passed this way as sure as fate," the youth exclaimed aloud.

Dismounting he found the marks of a horse's foot plainly visible. His conjectures were all set adrift. Why should the bandit's wife be taken into the valley? He did not stop long to speculate upon the matter. His mission was to find her, and no odds which way duty led him he was ready to go.

Rolly pressed on as fast as Jet could travel. Another surprise, and one more startling, awaited the boy. Two or more miles into the valley had been traversed when a cry, scarcely human in sound, fell upon Rolly's ears. The boy drew rein. The voice had come from a point close at hand. The next moment there emerged from a cluster of bushes a strange human object. A man robed in thin furs from head to foot. He was of middle age. The thin skins of which his garment were made was as spotted as Joseph of old.

The face was pale and sad, or rather of a yellowish hue, with a woe-begone look. As he lifted his large, gray eyes to Rolly the boy could not repress an exclamation of pity. He had never in all his life seen an object like that before.

"He has come!" the man in fur said, a change coming over his face.

"Who has come?" Rolly asked.

"My father. He told me to wait for him. I waited a long time, but he came."

"Do you live in the mountains?" the boy asked.

"Yes, I have been living here waiting for him to come back."

"Your father left you here and went away?"

"Yes."

"And has returned?"

"Yes."

Rolly thought the man looked as though he had been hidden from civilization for ten years.

"Where is your home?" he asked.

"It is a long way off."

"And where is your father?"

"He is there."

"Have you seen a horse pass this way, ridden by a lady?" Rolly asked.

"A horse has passed this way, but it was dark then, and my eyes are not cat's eyes."

"You could not see who rode it?"

"You are a true prophet."

"Well, that is all."

"Roll on, Philander. I like to see you roll."

With another laugh the boy started Jet forward.

"Stay a bit," the crazy man exclaimed, holding up his hand; "we have not had a formal introduction. We may meet again; the chain of forthcoming events may fling us together, as it were, and it is best that we know of whom we think in coming reverses."

"My name is Rolly Howard," the boy said, promptly. "I live at Extontville."

"Just so. My name is Marks Black. Two clips with the pen and you have it—Marks Black, see? You'll never forget that, will you, tadpole?"

"Certainly not; no boy ever forgets his black marks."

"Shake!"

The crazy fellow extended his hand as he spoke the word, and Rolly shook it vigorously.

"There are redskins in the valley below, my boy, and they admire a good horse."

Black spoke seriously.

"I am aware of it."

"Were it not for my old father I'd go with you. I must hurry back to him."

"Good-bye!"

"Stay, Philander, be not hasty; there is time for marching after I tell you that there are outlaws in the mountains who admire a good horse, also."

"I have met them."

"And still live?"

"You can see."

"It is well. They have caused me many——"

Marks Black stopped abruptly. He had glanced down the shrub-covered valley and seen what Rolly could not from his elevated position. Another instant and the crazy man bounded away. He was lost to sight in the thicket before the boy understood what the fellow had discovered. A few seconds of time passed and the head of a horse protruded from the shrubbery. It was followed by the body of the animal, upon which rested a stalwart, swarthy man.

Jet pricked up his ears and uttered a low whinny. It was his mate that had so suddenly appeared. The horse was bestrode by one of the road-agents.

Rolly understood as much. His hand flew to his revolver with almost imperceptible motion. They had met before. The bandit was as quick as himself. Each understood intuitively that he must defend himself.

CHAPTER XIII.—The Madman's Triumph.

"Up!"

The single word was uttered by the boy horseman as he drew his revolver.

Jet arched his neck and held his head high.

The rider dropped forward and presented his revolver close past the cheek of the trusty animal.

"Surrender!"

The voice was boyish, but there was a sternness about it that reminded the bandit of Fazelo.

"To whom?"

"To Rolly Rock."

"I thought it was the wildcat," the outlaw growled.

"Drop that pistol!"

The bandit hesitated. The command was repeated. Terrill thought of the captain's order, and also of his reward and concluded to obey. As Terrill lower his weapon he asked:

"Why demand my surrender?"

"You are a horse thief!"

"You are a liar!"

"You stole the horse you are riding."

The boy held his revolver still directed full at the outlaw's breast as he accused him.

"I have this horse by the order of its owner."

"And how about the woman?"

"What do you know of her?"

"I know that you stole a horse at Extontville to carry away a stolen lady."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"I am going to make you return both the lady and the horse."

"You'll tip the world over first."

"Then consider it tipped, for you will obey or die!"

There was a strange hollowness in the boy's voice that made the bandit quail. Should he tell how Fazelo had order him to take the horse and carry off the girl he would reveal the fact that Captain Fazelo and Fernando Howard were one and the same. That would never do.

"Drop that revolver!"

Terrill hesitated. Rolly's weapon was pushed forward a few inches. He repeated the words, and the heavy pistol of the bandit dropped to the sod.

"Now the other!"

"That is all."

"Drop the other or I fire!"

With a curse, Terrill drew the second seven-chamber pistol and let it fall to the earth.

"Your knife!"

That followed the two other weapons. It was the purpose of the boy to make the outlaw tell, now that he was disarmed, where he had taken Mrs. Howard. Just as he was about to move Jet forward there came a sudden change over the aspect of affairs. The hairy hermit darted out of the bushes and before the boy could divine his purpose he sprang forward and picked up the weapons that the bandit had dropped.

"The mountain maniac!" Terrill growled.

A chuckling laugh was the only answer.

Marks Black set the hammer of one of the revolvers, and leveled it upon the outlaw.

"Shoot the fiend!" Terrill cried to Rolly. "He will take my life!"

"My father has come back," the insane man said, slowly. "Your band did not kill him after all; but you tried to, and now I am going to kill you!"

Terrill feared the lunatic would do as he had promised, and he ground his heels into the sides of the horse he rode and bade him go. He was not quick enough. A pistol shot rang out and the bandit reeled in the saddle and then plunged to the earth. Rolly sat mute. He did not act, for he had no sympathy for the abductor of his mother. He was scarcely prepared for what followed. A new light came into the eyes of the maniac. A new strength appeared to come to his muscles. With a cry and a bound he landed squarely upon the horse's back and wheeling the steed, dashed away down the valley. It was a strange sight, that hairy object of many colors upon the chestnut horse, his long hair streaming back in the wind. Turning his head as he started, the crazy fellow cried out:

"Father came back last night. I am a chieftain now. Come on, tadpole, there is glory ahead!"

Rolly dismounted and bent over the prostrate horse. He lifted his bridle to start, when a groan from Terrill caused him to delay.

"That fiend has given me a clincher," the wounded man said.

Rolly dismounted and bent over the prostrate form. The boy could see at a glance that fatal work had been done.

"I am done for, lad, don't you know it?"

Rolly knelt down upon the surf and lifted the sufferer's head as gently as a woman could have done.

"Yes, you are done with this world, my man,

all done, save a little time for making amends for a bad life."

"Are you preaching about my soul?"

"I can do nothing for your soul; you must appeal to a higher power, but you can make amends to me by telling what you have done with my mother."

"Your mother, lad? Was that woman your mother?"

"She is my father's wife."

"And who is your father?"

"Fernando Howard."

"The——"

"The bandit chief."

"Fire and fury, boy! that is the reason he forbade any of us killing you; he knows you are after the band of road-agents."

"I did not know that he had detected my identity."

"He has, certain, but what do you want to kill us fellows for?"

"I do not wish to kill any one, but I have sworn to break up Fazelo's gang, and I shall do it."

The man gasped for breath, and a strange pallor overspread his face.

"Tell me quickly," Rolly said, "where is my mother and the old man, her father? What have you done with them?"

Terrill made a struggle and answered faintly: "The old man is dead; his body was put into a little boat and sent down the river."

"And my mother?"

"She is dead; the Crow chief——"

The sentence was never finished.

Terrill dropped back, and after a little labored breathing, expired. Rolly burst into a profusion of tears.

"Will this work of destruction never end?" he cried aloud.

Jet stood beside his master and looked down upon the mortal remains of the outlaw as if in sympathy. Rolly arose to his feet after the first outbreak had subsided, and cast about him as if uncertain what further to do.

"I must give this man burial," he muttered, "and then determined how to act."

Close beside him was a soft sand slope. Getting a thin piece of slate stone a foot or more square he made an excavation, and covered the body of Terrill as best he could. Rolly's mind was soon made up. Mounting Jet, he pressed on to the southward. That was the direction in which the Indian village lay, and that was the direction the crazy man had taken.

An hour's brisk ride revealed nothing. Another half hour passed, and Rolly saw a sight that made him pull Jet in suddenly. Half a dozen full-fledged Crow Indians were coming down a narrow pathway directly toward him.

Rolly backed his horse as quickly as possible into a little growth of shrubbery.

He bent down close to the animal's mane. As soon as Jet was at the best point that could, under the circumstances, be obtained, the boy slid from his position to the ground.

"Down, old fellow!" Rolly said, in a low tone of voice.

The steed promptly obeyed. Lowering himself upon his knees, Jet sank to the earth and stretched himself out flat. The Crows passed on. For-

tunately, their path did not lead them over the spot where the hoofs of Jet had made imprints in the soil. Rolly elevated his head as they passed on and peered through the bushes.

He watched them until a goodly distance away. Until, indeed, he felt there was no further danger from that source. In watching the Indians the boy had crept some little distance from Jet. He now crawled back to the animal, who lay flat upon its side.

For a quarter of an hour master and beast lay there in concealment after Rolly had left the post of observation. By that time the boy thought the Crows would be too far away to get sight of them, even if mounted.

CHAPTER XIV.—In A Mastiff's Jaws.

Rolly mounted his horse and rode on, changing his course to the east. At the foot of the mountain range ran a stream. For two miles at least the horse waded in the water. The rider kept a sharp lookout for the Indians. At length he espied the encampment. It was far distant, but the noonday sun shone down upon the white tufas, giving them a picturesque appearance.

Selecting the most favorable point for making an exit, Rolly rode out of the stream and made his way into a dense growth of small trees. Ensconced here we will leave our hero and look after other characters.

Mrs. Howard, in a semi-conscious condition, was borne away from her home. When she finally awoke her eyes opened upon a group of dusky faces. Gradually she came back to realization. She comprehended what had taken place, and then fainted dead away. She was believed to be dead. While she lay in the swoon Terrill left. When she came out of this the strength that she possessed was not manifested. She lay passive. Leather Tongue did not disturb her or allow any one else to. Night fell at last.

Mrs. Howard felt assured that she would not be closely watched.

She was considered helpless, "very sick," as the medicine man had termed it.

She had a spacious wigwam and a young squaw as an attendant.

The Indian girl sat by her most of the time and made no attempt to arouse her charge.

The evening deepened into night, and a lonely night it was.

Both stars and moon shone down through the clear ether.

It was so light that the lady's heart sank within her, for she had determined upon an attempt to escape.

Why was she there?

She asked herself the question over and over again, but could find no answer.

The young squaw became weary in watching the almost lifeless charge, and she sank down upon her robe and passed off into dreamland.

Mrs. Howard's mind was wonderfully active.

She resolved to creep from the lodge and leave the encampment.

Although she had not tested her strength under the excitement she believed herself in full possession of her wonted muscular vigor.

She lifted herself upon her elbow, then to a sitting posture.

Action was stayed for half a minute to listen.

Not a sound came, save the nasal respirations of the Indian girl.

She was about to move again when she left a thrill sweep through her frame that almost benumbed her.

"Mother!"

The name was spoken in a soft whisper.

She knew the voice, and the flash of mingled hope and joy was like the glow of sunlight.

"Rolly!"

The answer was low and tremulous.

Just then there came to both the ears of mother and son a rapid beating upon the earth, a muffled growl, and to the boy's eyes a flying object.

The next moment Rolly lay upon his back.

A bury mastiff had his jaws set upon the collar of the youth, with the grip of iron.

Mrs. Howard heard the contact and the growl, and she mistrusted what had taken place.

The dog and its victim were close at the side of the lodge.

"Are you hurt, Rolly?"

"Not at all, but I am helpless unless I use my revolver."

"That will not do; it will arouse the camp."

"Can you get me a knife, mother?"

"I have none, but perhaps the young squaw has one. I will see."

Although the occasion was one of no little excitement, yet the conversation was carried on in low whispers.

The guard, or rather attendant, had not been awakened.

The mastiff made but little noise.

His first hold was not loosened.

He made the boy a sure prisoner and held on.

If Rolly attempted to move the great dog uttered a warning growl, which the boy fully understood.

Our hero, had some doubts as to his ability to overcome the brute, even if he had a knife, for the mastiff was a quick as lightning in his motions.

Not a moment was the bandit's wife inactive.

She crept to the side of the Indian girl and silently began a search.

The lady's hand glided all about, but no knife was there. She crept back and reported her ill success.

"Then we must do the next best thing," Rolly answered.

"What is that?"

"Use the revolver and trust to flight."

"But the noise."

"Of course it will arouse the sleeping Crows, but we must trust to luck for escape."

"Have you a plan, Rolly?"

"Yes."

"I will follow it."

"Well, then, leave the lodge and go due east. Twenty rods beyond the limits of the encampment you will find Jet. He is in the shadow of a large rock, tied to a small evergreen that grows from a fissure in the great stone."

"Yes."

"Well, mount him and ride to the north. Let the polar star be the guide."

"Yes, but you?"

"When you have been gone long enough to have

mounted the horse I will shoot the dog and run, like a white-head, to the north. We can both escape upon the back of Jet."

Mrs. Howard acted at once.

She glided out of the wigwam, and after an affectionate glance at the boy, flitted away to the eastward.

Rolly was more anxious for his mother than himself.

He listened to her retreating footsteps and watched her as long as possible.

When he had begun to hope she was beyond danger of discovery he thought a stifled cry came to his ear, then he heard, or imagined he heard a gruff voice.

The boy turned his ear that he might gather every sound, but the smothered breathing of the mastiff made him uncertain as to what he did hear from afar.

Nothing more was heard from the eastward, and Rolly hoped that the sounds had been imaginary.

He measured the time as well as he could for his mother to reach Jet.

"I must get out of this," he said to himself. "Matters can't be made worse. If the dog holds me I will be captured sure. If I kill the brute I stand a chance of getting out."

Rolly drew his revolver and cocked it.

CHAPTER XV.—A Strange Deliverance.

The boy hesitated a moment before pressing the trigger.

Nerving himself for rapid action, he put the muzzle of the revolver close to the head of the brute and fired.

As he expected, the mastiff relinquished his hold and dropped like a stone to the earth.

Rolly jumped to his feet.

He cast about him for points of the compass, and then plugged off toward the north.

He passed the limits of the encampment, meeting no one.

The Indian village, or the part of it in close proximity to the tepees where the firing had taken place, was aroused.

Rolly glanced back and saw moving objects and heard shouts of one to another.

The boy stopped at length and listened.

Then he called out.

No sound of a horse's feet came to him and no reply to his call.

He wandered about for a little time in suspense, then the remembrance of the stifled cry came to him.

If his mother had not escaped, Jet would be where he left him.

The quickest way to determine the matter was to go to that spot.

A lively run for a few minutes took him to the rock.

Rolly was gratified to find the horse missing.

"She must have been here," he said to himself.

"No one else could have taken him."

Rolly regretted the loss of time required to reach the place.

He started back again.

As he did so the barking of dogs attracted his attention.

The animals were at about the place where he expected to have met his mother.

Rolly bounded on for a short distance and then he came to an abrupt standstill.

The dogs were coming directly toward him.

They came at a rapid rate of speed.

"The brutes are on my track," the boy exclaimed, in surprise; "they have been sent out by the Crows."

Retreat was useless.

It would only be changing location without gaining an advantage. He determined to make a stand.

Both revolvers were drawn, one in each hand.

Rolly was thoroughly drilled in the use of the weapons. He could handle them right and left with wonderful rapidity and precision.

The animals came up like a whirlwind.

There were four of them.

A bloodhound led the pack.

That long-eared brute was followed by three white Indian dogs.

Rolly stood lightly on his feet.

His right hand was extended, while the left was fixed across his breast.

He wavered not an inch.

As the hound landed near his feet, the boy's revolver rang out on the night air, and the hound sank to the sod without a whimper.

A bullet had been sent directly through the animal's brain.

The close proximity had given certain aim.

This lucky shot brought with it a certain degree of relief.

The most courageous brute was out of the way.

The others, however, were more noisy.

Rolly did not dread their fangs, but their short, yelping barks would guide the Crows to the spot.

The followers of the hound slackened their speed as they drew near the game, and turned tail at the pistol-shot.

They soon rallied and came on again.

The barking was increased double-fold.

Rolly was perplexed.

He could not get a shot at the cowardly whelps, and had no means of driving them away.

They darted about the boy at a safe distance.

One or two shots were expended upon the dogs without much expectation of injuring any of them, and they proved harmless to the canines.

They would retreat whenever Rolly rushed at them, but snap, growl and bark with increased vehemence.

While chasing one, the other two would whip around into the rear and pursue.

Rolly was never in a position in his life where he felt himself so completely baffled as then.

Courage and ingenuity did not avail.

While at first he was glad he had not fierce, savage brutes to contend with, now he wished he had.

While contending with these animals the boy was not entirely absorbed in the task before him.

He kept an eye out for the redskins.

They were expected and they came.

In a broad belt of moonlight that streamed down across the valley from between a couple of high mountain peaks, Rolly saw at least twenty armed Crow Indians coming toward him on a dead run.

"Worse and worse," the little hero exclaimed, a

look of perplexity sweeping over his handsome face.

If he could but get the dogs close enough to kill them it would not be a difficult matter to get away from the redskins in the darkness.

Rolly retreated.

He ran to the south, and, as he had expected, the whelps followed, yelping as if they were conquerors of the field.

One ventured near and lost its life by the act.

The other two kept a safe distance behind, but still followed. The boy soon found himself near the rock where Jet had been left before he entered the encampment.

The Indians were coming rapidly.

They reached the spot where the dead hound lay and stopped for a moment.

Then they halted again where the white dog had fallen.

Wild whoops arose, mingled with the barking of the two whelps left.

Although they had no idea whom they were pursuing, they knew him to be an enemy.

He had invaded their camp, helped the pale-faced lady from her lodge, killed their good watch-dog, and had slain their noted terailer and one of their wigwam pets.

This was enough to raise the indignation of the redmen to murderous intent.

Rolly took to the rock, for he knew of nothing better to do.

He had no such wall here as a Fazelo's Pit, but he could prevent the Indians surrounding him.

The extreme height of the rock was not more than ten feet, so no point upon it would screen him from the nemy's bullets.

He crawled up its uneven surface to near the top and turned to defend himself.

With his back against the gray stone, he held a revolver in each hand.

The Crows ran up to the rock and halted. Their eagle eyes soon detected the fugitive.

A dozen or more guns were elevated.

Rolly expected that the end had come.

Taking quick aim, he had begun pressing the trigger, when the cry came:

"Hold!"

One of the Crows could speak English.

It was Leather Tongue, the chief.

Every gun was lowered at the gesture of the sachem.

"Come down."

The order was given to Rolly.

"No, thank you," was the cool reply.

"Come down," was repeated.

"I shall not, as your captive."

"Then you will die where you are!"

"So will you!" Rolly cried, firing at the chief with the words.

The great Leather Tongue went down with a groan of distress.

Flames of fire seemed to burst out from the boy's two hands, and a confusion followed bellow.

Braves staggered and fell, and yell upon yell rang out upon the night air.

Rolly emptied his revolvers, but while he had lessened the force against him, he had not driven the foe away.

He was now at the mercy of the remaining force.

They were armed with loaded guns, eager for

vengeance, and the little defender in a helpless condition.

He saw the state of affairs, but knew not how to better it.

One half minute and he would be through with his work and his body lying a riddled piece of humanity at the base of the great stone.

This picture swept through his mind like a flash of light.

The Crows lifted their guns again, this time for certain work.

At the instant they did so a screech broke upon their ears more terrific than the screech of a panther.

They stopped to glance to the left.

A horse was coming close upon them with the fury of the tempest.

It was the fur-covered maniac upon a coal-black steed.

He swept up close to the rock and halted just an instant.

Rolly dropped from his perch behind the madman and the free-limbed horse swept on again.

It all came about so suddenly that it bewildered the boy not a little.

It was Jet that the maniac had come upon.

How came he by the horse?

What had become of Mrs. Howard?

These were questions that staggered Rolly Rock as he swept on in the wild ride.

CHAPTER XVI—Hung by the Wrists.

The Crows were so astonished at the sudden appearance of the mad rider that they stood like statuary during the few seconds of time required to stop and be off again.

They soon came to a realizing sense of what had taken place, and sent leaden missiles after the running horse, but they did no harm.

The boy had done destructive work.

Three were dead.

Several were seriously injured.

Leather tongue was still alive, but he had an ugly wound in the chest.

Preparations were soon made for conveying the unfortunate braves to the encampment.

The dead dogs were taken there, too, and buried with as much regret and ceremony as the brother warriors.

Leather Tongue retained his reason perfectly.

He was taken to a large white lodge in the eastern portion of the encampment.

It was his individual wigwam.

The news of his injury had preceded the wounded sachem, and peculiar demonstrations of grief were made as they bore him in.

A soft cot of skins was prepared for the chief upon the right as they entered the tepee.

Upon the left sat two squaws, and between them a white lady who was no other than Mrs. Howard.

When she had left the lodge that night to find Jet her hopes of escape were high.

They were soon dashed to the earth.

As she reached the margin of the encampment a tall form suddenly darted up behind her and a pair of strong arms were wrapped about her figure.

A stifled cry broke from her, then a heavy hand pressed upon her lips and she was carried helpless into the lodge.

It was Leather Tongue who had discovered and captured the woman.

The outbreak followed.

Leaving the captive with two Indian women, who he knew would keep the paleface, the chief went out in pursuit of the interloper.

When he came back, in the helpless condition, Mrs. Howard understood very well who had done the work.

She was anxious to know whether or not Rolly had escaped.

The chief turned to his captive and spoke:

"An enemy came to my camp; his face was white, he set you free and killed my braves."

Mrs. Howard coughed at the words.

Perhaps she could learn of the fate of Rolly.

"Are you sure he was a real enemy?" the lady asked.

"None but an enemy comes at night to kill."

"Did he harm any one until he was pursued?"

"A dog was slain."

"Did the paleface escape?"

Mrs. Howard showed a great degree of anxiety as she asked the question—more than she intended.

Leather Tongue eyed her closely.

"He escaped," the chief said, slowly. "My runners could not keep pace with a wild hare."

An exclamation of joy burst from the woman's lips.

She could not repress it.

The chief kept his deep-set black eyes upon her.

"He was a great friend to the paleface woman?"

The words came slow and measured.

"More than a friend, great chief; he was my son."

"He invaded our camp."

"For his mother's safety. You are trying to deprive me of my liberty. I was stolen from my home and brought here a prisoner. You hold me as a captive. Suppose, great chief, your squaw was carried off by an enemy and held by the whites, would not you go through fire and blood, even into death, to bring her back again? I never harmed one of your people or yourself, and yet you deprive me of my liberty. Why is it?"

"You reason well," the sachem replied, "but your story may not be true; it was a paleface girl to be brought, not a mother."

The truth flashed upon her like a thunderbolt. She had not found a satisfactory solution before.

It was all plain now, and her husband was at the bottom of it all.

She had been carried off in place of Madaline by mistake.

Leather Tongue noted the change that came over his captive.

"You know the great chief of the mountain robbers?"

The assertion was in the nature of an interrogation.

"I know him."

"He is a friend of yours?"

"He saved my life once."

"And you are willing to serve him for it?"

"I am."

"That robber chief is my husband."

"When the morning sun comes up you shall go free, and shall have a horse to ride and two braves to guard you."

All the delight and thankfulness the lady felt could not be expressed in words.

Leather Tongue's wound had been dressed and he became quiet.

Just as gray light of morning showed itself, Mrs. Howard was awakened by a strange, gurgling sound.

The two squaws were asleep.

The chief was breathing with difficulty.

The lady crept to the sufferer's side.

There was crimson upon his lips, which showed internal hemorrhage.

She knew not what to do.

In her pocket was a small bottle of ammonia and, drawing it forth, she applied it to the red-man's nostrils.

It did no harm, and no good, further than partially satisfying a desire to do something.

Just as she was about administering the volatile alkali the squaws awoke.

They saw the captive with the vial at the chief's face, and took the act of humanity as one of mischief.

They leaped upon the innocent woman, like a brace of tigers, and thrust her back to the side of the lodge.

Her hands and feet were quickly lashed with strong cords. Mrs. Howard cried out to the chief, but her words fell upon ears that heard not.

Leather Tongue had ceased to breathe.

The encampment was soon aroused.

The sachem's lodge was surrounded and loud lamentations were heard.

The squaws told what they had seen, and the cry went out that the palefaced captive had charmed the life out of his body.

They seized upon the helpless, frightened woman and dragged her from the wigwam.

A dozen rods and they reached a spote where a pole reached across the space intervening between a couple of saplings.

The pole lay in crotches of the two small trees, some eight feet from the ground.

Unbinding the victim's hands, they tied a cord around each wrist and threw these over the bar above.

Then they were drawn tight, so tight as to stretch the shapely arms upward to their full extent, and then the body until the toes touched the earth.

Thus she was left to suffer untold agonies.

CHAPTER XVII.—The Bandit Messengers.

Clinging to the hairy object in front of him, Rolly rode in silence until beyond gunshot from the place where the astonished Crows had been left.

He soon discovered, as we have said, that he was upon the back of Jet, his own pet steed.

The bullets from the enemy whistled past them as they sped on, and the supple horse renewed his effort.

"How came you by this horse?" Rolly ventured to ask, after a while.

"My father has come back, you middy. He told

me to see you out of your trouble. I'm a good rider, see!"

The crazy man dug his heels into Jet's sides and yelled like an enraged panther.

The horse leaped ahead, but a word from Rolly brought him so quickly down to a standstill that both of the riders came near going over his head.

Marks Black tried to urge him on again, but the low voice of the boy kept him from moving a step.

Jet stood stolid in his tracks.

"Tell me how you got possession of this horse, and how you happened to come to me at the moment of extreme peril, and I will bid Jet go on," the boy said.

"I am as one crying in the wilderness. I pick up a horse wherever I get a chance. Don't bother me, Philander, let us march."

"Then you found the horse hitched by the rock, did you not, Mr. Black?"

"That's good, tadpole, call me Mr. Black. How am I, Mr. Black? But darn the stupid horse, all the same. He's a balky cuss. I am sorry I took him at all. Hark! I hear the angels coming, hear their whoops and hear their drumming; fearless Egyptian mummy, why sit ye idly waiting?"

"What became of the lady when you took this horse from her?" he asked, hoping to draw the fellow out in that direction.

"You are too young, too tender, to love; so my huckleberry, the goddess has flown. She flitted away like a frightened bird on the wings of the tempest."

Throwing one leg over the horse's neck, he dropped lightly to the earth and darted away, without adding another word.

Rolly watched until Black had disappeared. He was again in possession of Jet, but what was he to do? Rolly let Jet take his own course, and the horse walked on, deliberately towards the pass.

At length the spot was reached where Big Foot had fallen. Lying grim was the stalwart form as it had been left. Rolly turned away from the scene.

He waited and watched until the dawn had fully come.

His bundle of provisions was still fastened to the saddle, so he guided Jet into a thicket upon a little plateau where grazing was good and seclusion from the common path complete.

Rolly was meditating upon the lively events of the past few days when his attention was attracted by the appearance of two white men on the path below, wending their way to the southward.

They were the two bandits whom Fazelo had sent out in quest of Terrill.

Suddenly the brace outlaws discovered the dead body of the Crow brave, and they stopped to investigate.

While they were doing this, Rolly saw other objects which fastened his attention.

Further up the valley were a party of Crows returning to camp.

Evidently they were the same posse to which Big Foot had belonged.

All was quiet until the savages reached the spot where their dead comrade lay.

They gazed with awe for half a minute, and then there came a howl of rage that beggars description.

The Crows believed that the white men preceded them had done the deed.

They no longer skulked from bush to bush.

With the wildest demonstrations they started in pursuit of the supposed enemy.

CHAPTER XVIII.—To The Bitter End.

When the war-whoop sounded, the two bandits started suddenly, and turned about to see what was up.

"By the long-horned spoons, Jake, the red fiends mean us!" said one, a tall, dark-faced man.

"Pears that way, Seth, but the Crows are friendly to us."

Just then a bullet cut the brim of Jake's hat. There was no further speculation relative to the intention of the Indians. Jake and Seth were saving their powder and lead for sure work. They were not very well supplied with cartridges. Their mission was a friendly one, and they had not looked for trouble from the Crows. Through the shrubbery Seth noticed a gray eagle quill projecting above a cluster of dense leaves. The head and body of a savage, in all probability, was below the feather. It might be a ruse, Seth thought, but he proposed to expend a shot upon the hypothesis that a redskin was there. Leveling his revolver, the trigger was pulled, and following the sharp report came a howl of pain, and a stalwart savage plunged into full view and dropped prone upon the earth. Seth uttered a chuckle of satisfaction.

"Down, Jake!"

The two men fell flat upon the earth.

"Now the ball is open, the dance will begin," Seth continued, as he peered through the shrubs, his face close to the ground.

The dance did begin. A volley followed the revolver shot. The Crows were watching closely, and they sent leaden missiles whistling through the leaves at the spot where the smoke had arisen. The bullets went too high to do harm.

"Yell!" cried Seth.

Both men howled as if in mortal agony. Only a cry or two was uttered, and then all became silent. The Indians were in doubt. They did not dash on pell-mell, but became a little careless. Two of them exposed their persons, and were quickly punished for so doing. Three Crows had fallen and only two remained. These two returned the shots. Their aim was accurate. Jake fell dead. Seth was wounded in the arm. His revolver fell from his grasp, but he caught it up again and retreated. The brace of reds saw his movements, and with a yell of triumph followed. Seth turned, and with his left hand emptied four chambers of his weapon. He had the satisfaction of seeing one of his pursurers quiver and sink to the sod. Again the sides were even. Seth against a single Crow. Somehow each got the impression that the other was attempting to get away by ascending the mountainside, and so each worked his way carefully upward. They reached the rocks without exchange of shots.

Rolly occupied a position where he could witness nearly all that was taking place. He understood how the game had gone thus far, and his interest deepened. He was the friend of neither party. Nearer and nearer they came together,

and yet unseen by each other. There was an abrupt turn, and the two figures came upright. The bandit, Seth, and the Crow were facing each other. A rifle flew to the front and a revolver was thrust forth. Two explosions as one sounded out over the mountain crags. Two forms swayed an instant and then toppled over into open space and went whirling downward. There were sickening thuds upon the base below and Rolly knew that not one was left of the contending parties to tell the tale of destruction.

CHAPTER XIX.—Dread Uncertainties.

After the Indians had finished their diabolical work of tying their captive up by the wrists, the most of those who had congregated at the spot went back to the tepee where the great chief, Leather Tongue, lay dead. There was great lamentation. The Crow braves smeared their faces, while squaws moaned in a most distressing manner. Mrs. Howard gazed about her in despair. Not a soul could understand her pleadings for release. Then suddenly came a change. A gleam of hope was on her features. From just around a bend where rocks and shrubs had cut off the view a horseman appeared. Scarcely had the woman caught sight of the steed and man before they swept up at her side. There was a flash of a knife, a strong pull upon the lady's slender figure, and away swept the horse bearing the intended victim of the revengeful Crows.

She had been rescued by Marks Black, the mountain maniac. It was the bandit Fazelo's horse; the one that the crazy fellow had taken from Terrill. The beast was fleet of foot, and only a few minutes' time was required to take his burden well away from the Indian encampment. The Crows pursued as rapidly as they could after getting started, but to no avail.

The Crows kept up their search well into the day. There were at least a dozen mounted warriors. They lost the trail of the maniac's horse, for the reason that in moving up through the cut in the mountains the animal had followed the bed of a stream. The trail of Jet was at length struck and followed. The direction he had gone was quite different from that taken by the other. The madman had gone to the east, while the footprints of Rolly's horse were to the north. The boy had kept his position upon the plateau where he had witnessed the extermination of the contending bandits and redskins. Rolly discovered the dozen horsemen as they came down the valley, but he did not suspect that they were upon his trail. He observed, however, that a runner was in advance of the mustang riders, leading them rapidly on. It was too late to retreat when Rolly saw that they were coming directly toward him. The runner soon caught sight of Jet, and he quickly imparted the information to the riders. One minute more and Rolly stood facing the twelve.

"Why have you come to disturb the rest of a peaceful traveler?" he asked, gazing upon the dusky faces.

No one answered. The Crows looked from one to another, and shook their heads. The leader spoke to Rolly in his own tongue, and the boy shook his head in turn. The spokesman pointed to the boy, and then toward the village. Rolly

bowed again. He understood that he must go with them. The second Indian dismounted and stepped forward with a small bunch of leather thongs in his hand. He moved up to Rolly as if to bind him without any further delay. The boy stepped quickly back and drew a revolver in each hand. Guttural sounds went the rounds among the reds. There was work for them after all. The man with cords hesitated, and it was well for him he did so. As the redskins hesitated, Rolly pointed toward their village with another bow. They understood that he would go with them peaceably, but would not be bound. This was somewhat against Indian dignity. Rolly feared they would insist. A new thought occurred. There were the slain Crows and bandits in the valley by the river. With peculiar gesticulations, Rolly pointed to the spot where the dead men lay. They seemed to comprehend his meaning and sent their runner down to the spot indicated. The Indian soon came back with bad tidings, and no little stir was occasioned among the savages. Rolly then pointed to the base of the cliff with the same gesticulations, and the messenger went and returned again, and his words added new anxiety to the party of twelve. The third spot was pointed out. It was where Big Foot lay. When the runner came back and told what he had seen, a howl of rage arose. The tracks of the horse were there. Every brave drew a weapon and gleamed upon Rolly.

CHAPTER XX.—A Deadly Enemy.

The Crows turned upon the boy, who faced them as stolid as a stone. The firmness and determined look of Rolly no doubt had a good deal to do with the conclusion. Rolly waved his hand again toward the Indian village. The braves bowed their acceptance of his terms. He would go to the village, but not as their prisoner. So by gesticulations it was agreed.

The runner, with a glow of enthusiasm in his black, deep-set eyes, looked toward Jet. He exchanged a few words with the twelve, and then proceeded to mount. Rolly was to walk. That was the way the Indians decided it. A smile flitted over the boy's face. The young Crow leaped upon Jet's back, and the next moment he lay sprawling ten feet from the trained horse. The Crows were amused. Not another Indian tried to mount Jet. So Rolly was allowed to ride his horse to the Indian encampment, which was reached in due time.

Rolly allowed Jet to be lariatied with the mustangs just outside the village, but he resolved to keep his eye upon the animal whenever Split Ear was around. Somehow he could not rid himself of the idea that the athlete meant him mischief. He was not mistaken, as time proved. One fortunate thing for Rolly occurred the afternoon that he reached the Crow encampment. A halfbreed came in from the south, and this fellow could speak tolerable English, and made a pretty fair interpreter. Rolly formed the acquaintance of the halfbreed as soon as possible after his arrival. He did not venture far at first. To tell who he was or to be anxious about the woman captive would lead to the suspicion that he was the camp interloper who did so much harm. Rolly learned that the bandit chief was a great friend of the

Crow sachem, and he at once grasped at the fact to turn it to his own benefit.

Through the halfbreed, whose name in English was Fancy John, the boy told the brave next in power to Leather Tongue that he was the son of the mountain robber captain, and had come on an errand pertaining to the welfare of the outlaw. The chief answered that the bandit was no friend of his; that Leather Tongue had been favored by him, and was, when alive, willing to return the favor, but he had no reason to befriend him or his boy more than other whites.

Night settled over the Crow camp, and Rolly was given quarters where he promised to remain and make no attempt to leave. Rolly lay in his lodge a few hours, and then determined to go and take a look at Jet. He hardly believed that the horse would be disturbed, yet the boy could not rest until he had seen the noble fellow and been assured he was safe. The camp was quiet and Rolly met no one. He had been gone but a few minutes when a form came stealthily to the wigwam just vacated. Dropping upon all-fours, the figure crept cautiously around to the entrance and, after listening a moment, entered. It was not the figure of the athlete, but that of the runner, at whose breast Rolly had leveled his revolver. Finding the lodge empty, the young Indian drew himself into as close a sitting position as he could occupy at the side of the wigwam, determined to await the arrival of the white boy. He had in his hand a large hunting-knife. He had shown less hatred than Split Ear, but his revengeful nature burned within him until he was goaded to a cowardly act.

Half an hour passed, and then he drew closer down, for a step was heard from the outside. The interloper kept himself in position for instantaneous action. The figure that had come hesitated at the passway. The crouching Crow feared he had been seen, but he kept his position. Discovered or not, he would drive his blade through the heart of the paleface who had forced him to yield to his demands at the muzzle of a revolver. The white boy came in cautiously. He acted, at all events, as if he believed some one was there.

As a cat watches a mouse, so the revengeful savage watched the slow approach of the white enemy. Nearer and nearer he came, until within reach of the well-nerved arm. Gathering all his strength, the young Crow sprang upon the figure with a muffled growl. His arm came down with all its power, and the sharp blade cut its way, like a flash, through the human flesh it met. A cry of pain followed. Two cries broke the stillness of the night. The second blade descended at the same instant as the first. The assassin was stabbed as terribly as the one he had assulted. There was a shock to both. They shrank from each other at first, then came together again in mortal combat. The lodge was dark and the figures could only be outlined, but they slashed away with all their strength, each trying to shield himself, and at the same time to make a quick and fatal end to the foe. Knife met knife; arm struck and ward off the fatal steel; blood flowed freely from occasional murderous slashings, and ever and anon the growls of enraged men could have been heard for some distance away. They clinched at last and held each other too tightly to do much further harm.

Then came a struggle for the mastery. It was

the desire of each to disarm his opponent. They fell toward the opening and rolled out into the glow of the moonlight, closely knotted together. By that time a score of redmen had been aroused and were congregating at the point of disturbance. The combatants lay struggling. They were face to face, expending all of their wasting strength in the struggle for the mastery. All at once their heads flew apart, eyes met eyes, their hands relinquished their holds and the combatants sat upright. Exclamations of surprise burst from the lips of each at the same moment. Neither one looked upon the white boy. The runner had been struggling with Split Ear, who had visited the lodge for the same murderous work as the first. Rolly was there to witness the separation, and Fancy John learned from him the probable reason for the bloody contest. He had seen both the Crows enter his tepee and believed he understood what they were there for. Another night passed, and early in the day Fancy John came to him with the news that both of the would-be avengers were dead. Further on in the day the halfbreed came again with news that chilled the little hero with horror.

CHAPTER XXI.—Strange Old Man.

When the bandit captain left his house at Extonville he was in no agreeable frame of mind.

"Every one has turned against me," the outlaw muttered, gritting his teeth.

Thus Fazelo talked to himself as he dashed away into Giacomo Pass. He would go to the mountain inn first. Applying the spurs vigorously, he dashed down through the shadowed pass, on through the pit, then out into the sunlight up the winding valley to the unpretentious tavern. Chester Ream, the landlord, met the captain at the door.

"Has Terrill come?"

Fazelo looked anxious as he spoke.

"No."

"Seth or Jake?"

"No."

"Heavens and earth! what's up?"

"Run on ter that cat of a boy, I reckon."

Rolly was one the trail of his mother, sure. Fazelo believed the landlord's solution of the matter correct. Before he had time to think over the matter very much the landlord started toward the stable and motioned the bandit to follow. Fazelo knew that Ream had something to tell him, and he followed promptly. Dismounting, he led the horse to the barn.

"What is it, Chet?"

"There's an old man in the house."

The captain started perceptibly. His thoughts at once flew to Colonel Wallace.

"But the old fellow is dead," came the consoling suggestion. "It can't be he."

"Who is he?" Fazelo asked, trying to show no concern.

"Blamed ef I know; he's an' old snoozer, and a doctor, too; he's done a good thing fer Tiger an' Bruce, but says their cases are bad."

"He's not the same old man who left here in the stage with Tiger and Rolly Rock, then?"

"Not a bit on't. That old duffer was a big, pompous old cuss; this hyar feller is as thin as a shingle, an' older by twenty years, but he's lightenin' in the medicine business."

"How came he to see the boys?"

"He writ his name down as Dr. Bleeker, er somethin' of that sort, an' I said to him, 'Be you a doctor?' an' he said, 'I be,' so, as the boys was sufferin' like blazes, I thought I'd better have the old herrin' look 'em over a bit."

"Did he pry into our affairs at all?"

"Not a mite, cap, but somehow I got the idea that the old herrin' ain't on any business hyer but ter see what's goin' on. He said maybe he'd stay a week, an' maybe he'd stay but a day or two; he'd see."

Chester Ream came out to the stable door, then, where the bandit captain stood. The horse had been cared for, and the two men went into the house. The barroom was empty. The old man who had been the subject of conversation was in the back room with the wounded men. Presently he came out. Ream had not overdrawn the matter at all. The two men nodded as their eyes met. The landlord watched them closely, but discovered nothing peculiar in the action of either. The fact was Fazelo did not believe he had even seen that face before, and to all appearances the old man had never met the bandit before. The white-haired physician stopped to talk but a minute, and passed out of doors. As soon as his footsteps had died away Ream asked:

"Well, what think ye, cap'n?"

"I see nothing out of the way. He is a stranger, and doubtless has business here that is entirely his own affair. I doubt his having any money."

"Maybe not, but I'm blamed ef I don't think he'll need watchin'."

"Well, watch him, then. As for me, I'm going to the Crow encampment."

"To see about the woman?"

"I want you to get my gold out of the cellar and put it into shape for carry upon the stage. Pack the two boxes hidden in the wall, northeast corner, in a trunk. Make the rest of the filling of any light material. I am going East with what I have secured, and shall return with my property in different shape, and then see what is to be done. You have got enough, Chet, to rely on, and have been wishing for months to get out of this unlawful business of borrowing by compulsion, and at the mouth of a revolver."

"Yer mighty right, cap, I've got enough of it. I hev grown awful sick on it in the last few days."

"Where is your money, Chet?"

"Mine's in the southeast corner, a-hind stones of the wall, and Tige's, Bruce's and the fellers' what's dead is altogether in the southwest corner, and the other trinklets undivided am in the northwest corner."

The two men in conference had not closely watched for the return of the old doctor. Neither one knew that a pair of sharp, black eyes were watching them, or that a pair of acute ears were gathering in all that they said, and yet such was the case. The old doctor had their secret, and he was fully resolved to make use of it.

CHAPTER XXII.—Cleaned Out.

When Fazelo went out to the stable to get his horse, he noticed the old doctor coming from the rear of the inn, as if he had been for a tramp

along the base of the mountain. The bandit soon appeared, mounted, and as he rode past the tavern both Ream and the physician stood in the door. With a wave of the hand, Fazelo galloped away.

"Mighty fine man that," the host remarked, turning to the old guest.

There was no response.

"He's a business man, a good one; I know him, fer he's stopped with me many a time," the landlord continued.

No reply to this.

"What do ye think of him, doctor, anyhow?"

Chester Ream acted and the tone of his voice indicated that he was a little vexed.

"He is a stranger to me," the guest returned. "I do not form opinions readily. I can tell better after further acquaintance."

This satisfied the host to some extent—not entirely.

"He is rich, they say," Ream continued.

"Did he get it honestly?" came the quick return.

The innkeeper cringed a little.

He turned upon the old man, savagely, but did not give vent to the words which came up to his lips. A pair of ebony-black eyes met his own with a steadfast gaze.

"Of course he got it honestly. How did ye suppose he got his money?"

"I have no opinion to offer. I simply asked the question."

"Ye don't tell all ye think. If ye didn't think somethin' ye wouldn't ask the question."

"Mr. Ream, I don't mistrust that man any more than I do yourself. Why should I?"

Very wisely the innkeeper cut short the conversation by going away from the door. He determined not to say more to the old fellow at present, but to watch him, and if he proved to be a spy or detective to take means to rid the place of him forever. Ream took the first opportunity he could get to talk with Bruce and Tiger. He told them that he believed the doctor was a wolf in sheep's clothing, but neither of the wounded men had seen anything to awaken their suspicions. By nightfall the Blue Globe was peculiarly quiet.

The two sick men were restless, the landlord was gloomy and the white-haired medical man reticent. Dinner had been late on account of the travelers stopping, and supper was equally so. It was almost bedtime before the table was spread. The doctor was allowed full sway in the kitchen, for it was necessary for him to have the stove for preparing warm drinks and surface applications for his patients. While the hostess was spreading the table the old man quickly lifted the lid of the teapot and dropped into the vessel a little substance which he had between thumb and finger, and then dropped the lid again.

He worked away at his poultices as if unmindful of anything going on around him. He ordered, when supper was ready, that the two wounded men have a cup of tea with some plain toast. Half an hour after the evening meal had been finished the doctor found the matron of the inn fast asleep in her chair by the stove, and a minute later he found Chester Ream with his head on his arms at the low counter in the barroom, unconscious of anything. He shook the landlord vigorously, but he was as limp and

senseless as a bag of jelly. Tiger and Bruce were, for the time being, out of their sufferings.

"Now for work," the old man said to himself, as he picked up a candle and started for the cellar.

A rude ladder led into the windowless apartment below, which had nothing unnatural in appearance. The sides were stoned up, but no mortar had been used. The old man was not long in finding a spot where the stones could be removed and a passway made into a second apartment much larger, but windowless also.

The investigator elevated his candle and looked about the room. There were several chairs, a table, two or three cots upon the floor, while upon the wall there hung numerous suits of clothes. One to enter the place would not suspect that it was a secret den for road-agents, for nothing brilliant or costly was displayed.

As men congregated there only to secrete their treasure, it was not made a stronghold. One minute of time was sufficient to satisfy the curiosity of the doctor. Setting down his candle, he went first to the northeast corner to look for the captain's money.

The keystone was soon found and, after removing that, others came out easily. Two iron boxes, six or eight inches square, were taken out. They were exceedingly heavy. The old man carefully replaced the stones and then went to the southwest corner. From this another iron box was taken. Each corner was visited, and each turned out its deposit to the old man. Five boxes in all, and all heavy. Further search was made, but the work was fruitless. The treasures were carried into the main cellar and the stone wall built up as it had been found. Box by box the store of wealth was carried from the little tavern and away.

With the last box was carried a coil of wire which was found hanging in the kitchen. Bands of wire were wrapped around each casket of gold, and then by a rod some ten foot long lowered to the bed of the stream and the end of the wire secured below the surface of the water. Thus each box was buried, and so securely that no one would find it.

The work completed, the old man went back to the tavern, carefully dressed the wounds of the two bandits, wrote a line and placed it near the sleeping landlord, and took his departure. Not until near morning did the inn-keeper awake. Going back to the barroom, his eyes fell upon the note left for him to read. He caught up the scrap of paper, gazed upon it for a moment, and then dropped it, with a curse, and rushed for the cellar.

The note read:

"CHESTER REAM:

"Your game is up! The ill-gotten gains of yourself, as well as those of Captain Fazelo, are gone. The sub-cellar was poor security. Your only means of escaping death by hanging is immediate flight. I, as a victim of the mountain bandits, have suffered and shall show no mercy.

"DR. ROGER BLEEKER."

When Chester Ream came up from the cellar he was as pale as a ghost, and the candle shook from the trembling of his hand.

CHAPTER XXIII.—Father and Son.

It was almost nightfall when Fancy John found Rolly down on the flat where the horses were corraled.

"There has a white man come," John said; "he is the mountain king."

"He is my father."

"So you told me before. Don't you want to see him?"

"Not at present. What has he come for?"

"He is looking for a white woman."

Rolly brightened. Here was his chance.

"What has become of her?" Rolly asked anxiously.

"She was carried away."

"By whom?"

"A wild rider—a man all covered with hair, like a bear."

The boy started, an expression of deep anxiety sweeping over his face.

"Why did not the Crows stop him. He is a madman."

"He came as the whirlwind and swept her away. The braves followed, many of them, upon their mustangs, and brought back you."

While they were talking Rolly looked up toward the encampment and saw the tall figure of a white man approaching.

"My father is coming, John. Leave me, please; I wish to see him alone."

Rolly watched the man as he advanced. As he drew near a smile lit up his face. He extended his hand, exclaiming:

"Rolly, my boy, I am glad to see you!"

"We meet under painful circumstances," the lad returned, eyeing the bandit closely.

The man winced at the way the boy spoke.

"You are here in quest of your mother, Rolly?"

"I am."

"Yes, Rolly, she must be found."

"What think you of the bandits who kidnapped her?" the boy asked, gazing squarely into the face of the man before him.

"They are desperate fellows. They took all my money, as well as my wife. They must be punished."

The troubled man paced the turf for a minute, and then coming back to the starting point he said, hoarsely:

"I am no longer an outlaw. Rolly Rock has done his work. My men have fallen, nearly all of them, in the past three days. What have escaped bullets have deserted me and gone. I stand to-day alone, penitent, because I am weak. Will you join me in the search for your mother, my wife?"

"I shall search for her, surely. You can do the same. We will go together or separately, as you choose."

"We will go together, then."

"As you say."

They left the Crow encampment without any objections being raised by the Indians. The two horsemen rode up the valley for several miles. Night set in about them. Finally they turned

into a narrow cut. Rolly believed that the wild Marks Black had taken to that cover after vanquishing the bandit Terrill and seizing upon the horse and weapons.

It was a gloomy place. Fazelo, brave man as he was, hesitated. Perhaps it was a premonition. Certainly, had he known what was before him, he would have wheeled his horse and sped from the place.

CHAPTER XXIV.—Exchange of Shots.

The man's position was an unpleasant one. He was the leader of a gang of outlaws, and his son an enemy, and a dreaded one, too, of these desperadoes. The boy could but look upon his father as a man unworthy of the name, and there was an absence of that filial affection which should bind those together holding that relationship.

Rolly had seen but very little of his father.

The horsemen could see what was before them now and mark out a safe path. For some time after the moon came out the two rode on, every moment on the alert. Of a sudden both horses were brought to a standstill. A wild, weird cry broke out on the stillness of the gorge. Rolly had heard it once before.

"It is the lunatic," he said, turning to the bandit.

Scarcely were the last words uttered before a human figure was visible in the moonlight.

"The tadpole is abroad to-night."

The words were followed by a chuckling laugh.

"I have come to make you a visit, Mr. Black. Shall we go to your house?" Rolly returned, calmly, and in his most persuasive voice.

"Certainly; my humble abode is not far away. My father has come, as I knew he would, so I am happy once again—as happy as a June bug on a sweet-potato vine. Come!"

The crazy man turned and led the way down the narrow gulch. Just at that time he had reached a narrow pass upon a shelf of rock some ten or twelve feet above the river. He stopped here and turned to the followers. The moon shone full upon the bandit's face. Black gazed upon it for a moment, and then gave a cry of the most startling nature.

"Tis he, the demon of the pass!" the madman cried. "He is the one who kept my father away from me so long, and now he shall die!"

Then followed a mocking, demoniac laugh. Scarcely had the dismal sounds died away when there came the sharp report of a revolver. Marks Black had fired full upon the bandit chieftain. The man sat motionless for a second or two, and then whipped out a revolver and returned the shot. The madman sank to the rock, to the very edge, and in a struggle to regain his feet lost his balance and fell, headforemost, over the verge of the stone base below. Fazelo saw him disappear. He turned quickly to Rolly and exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper:

"My boy, I am done for."

Rolly had scarcely time to comprehend what had taken place when a voice fell upon his ear. It was not the voice of either of the wounded men. An old man stood upon the rock just where Marks Black had fired. The voice and figure were both familiar to the boy.

"Grandfather!"

"Rolly, bless my eyes, what is the trouble?"

It was Colonel Wallace who had appeared. The boy explained in a few words, and added:

"But I thought you dead!"

"Not by a long shot; but is your father badly hurt?"

"I fear so; he said a moment ago he was done for."

"Let us see!"

Colonel Wallace went to the bandit's side and found the man apparently insensible.

"We had better go to the grotto," the old man said. "I think I can support the—the—Mr. Howard in his position as he is conveyed."

The colonel led the way, walking close beside the horse and holding firmly upon the wounded man. One minute's time was sufficient to reach the grotto. Here another surprise was in store for the boy. Mrs. Howard came forward and greeted him affectionately. She did not know what had taken place, but she had heard the voice of the boy, and she thought of nothing else. The lady was startled when the facts were related to her. She shuddered, and then, composing herself, said:

"Let Fernando be brought in."

The helpless bandit was taken down and carried into the little retreat. It was a rocky recess some ten feet deep, the front being walled up by flat stones. Fazelo was laid down upon a bed of dried leaves and grass and a light procured. A little animal oil in a clam shell, with a cotton string for a wick, served for a lamp. The bandit's wound was in the breast, and a serious one.

"Do you think he will live?" Mrs. Howard asked.

"I don't believe he can, but we will do all that can be done to save him."

That duty was soon performed, and the colonel turned to Rolly and said:

"We must look after Black. He has done much for us, and may need our attention."

The boy thought there was no doubt about it. After the two had left the grotto, Rolly asked:

"How in the name of all that's wonderful came you here, grandfather?"

"Come by boat. I was chloroformed and set adrift by the robbers—at least by some one. I was partially conscious. I knew something of what was taking place, but had not physical force to resist. I floated down here in a semi-conscious condition, and just at dawn was discovered by the crazy fellow, who called me his father and took me in and cared for me most kindly. But here we are. See this. The man is insensible or dead."

They took the body up, for it was not heavy, and carried it to the grotto. Daylight came, and with it a revival in the condition of Fazelo. He opened his eyes and gazed about him. He seemed to realize what had taken place. A hand was held out to his wife, who was kneeling by his side. She took it tenderly, saying:

"You are better, Fernando?"

"The wretch has killed me, Belle. That maniac has sent a bullet so near my heart that I shall never recover. Why should he have done it,"

"Because you made him what he is."

The words came in a strange male voice. All eyes were turned to the door of the grotto, where they fell upon the erect form of a white-haired old man.

CHAPTER XXV.—The Wind-up.

The man who spoke was Dr. Bleeker. He had entered unobserved, as the attention of every one at that moment was directed toward the wounded bandit. The old physician then hastened to examine the wounds of the madman. A strange, gurgling sound coming from Captain Fazelo attracted the wife's attention.

Rising quickly, she stepped to the side of the newcomer and, touching him gently on the arm, asked:

"Are you a physician?"

The old man bowed.

"My husband, I fear, is dying; will you see?"

Doctor Bleeker went at once to the bandit.

Fazelo was breathing with difficulty, but he spoke:

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Roger Bleeker, of New York."

"Why are you here?"

"I am, or was, in quest of my son, whose reason you dethroned months ago. My son and myself came on the stage from Sacramento with a large amount of gold early in the spring. While in the pass we were robbed by yourself and murderous gang. My son resisted, and was hit a heavy blow upon the head. He fell from the coach and I thought him dead. I started to follow, when the driver put whip to the horses, and we flew on. The next morning I returned to the pit, but there was no trace of my son. I gave him up for dead. A month ago I learned of a madman in the mountains, and, hoping it might be Marks, I came, and I find him at the door of death. It was you who struck him at the coach, for I saw your face, and his death now will be upon your soul."

Fazelo listened to the words, but made no reply. He had braced himself for the minute, and a reaction came.

"My gold is at the Blue Globe—Ream will tell you where," the dying man said to his wife, and after a few gasps for breath he expired.

The doctor turned his attention again to the wounded maniac.

About the hour of dawn Marks opened his eyes for the first time since his injury. He gazed for a little time at the doctor, and then exclaimed:

"Father, what has happened?"

"His reason is returning," the physician said.

The man did not recognize any one present but his father, and all was as a dream when his exploits were related by the boy. Rolly asked the doctor how it came that the son's name was Black.

"It is not," the old man replied.

"But he called himself Marks Black."

"A freak of his insanity. I remember now that when a youth he used to say his name was Black, for the reason that black was bleaker than brown or any other color; therefore, if black was bleaker, his name was as much Black as Bleeker. It was simply some of his boyish nonsense."

Early that morning Rolly mounted Jet and went to Extonville. A vehicle was brought as near the grotto as possible, and the wounded man by means of a litter carried to it and then to the mountain village. The remains of the dead bandit was also carried there for burial.

Mrs. Howard enjoined upon the doctor the necessity of keeping her secret, and it was kept. The report went out that Mr. Howard was killed

by the bandits and another member of the party badly injured. Ten days passed and Marks Bleeker, under the care of his efficient father, was able to start upon the eastward journey.

He was fully rational, and laughed over what he had done when his pranks were related by Rolly and Colonel Wallace. The maniac, believing the old man taken from the river to be his father, was ever obedient. The crazy fellow told something to the colonel of the white boy he met, and the white lady among the Crows, and the old gentlemen sent him out to find them, with most fortunate results.

As the mission of Colonel Wallace and Madaline to Extonville had been to try and persuade the wife of Fernando Howard to leave the place and her depraved husband, their work had not been in vain. The whole party arranged to go together. The cobble-stone house was sold and a large coach purchased that would carry the whole company. Julia, the maid of Mrs. Howard, refused to accompany the party, for what reason the lady did not know, until Jack Runnels, the stage-driver, put in an appearance and claimed her.

When they drew up in front of the Blue Globe no one came out to receive them. The door was locked and the inn deserted.

The two aged men and Rolly went down to the stream, and Dr. Bleeker very soon fished up the wires, and a few minutes later the five boxes were pulled upon the bank. At Gladbast the travelers learned that a week before Chester Ream, with his wife and two sick men, had passed that point, headed for Mexico. At Gladbast Colonel Wallace soon adjusted his affairs, and the party moved eastward, until a railroad line was reached, which gave conveyance to the Atlantic Coast. Jet, of course, was shipped and kept by Rolly as long as the horse lived.

The fancy that Madaline took to the brave boy on the night of her trouble grew into deep love and was fully returned. Five years after reaching the great city she became Mrs. Rolly Howard, who was then treasurer and a heavy stockholder in the bank of which Colonel Wallace was president. Mrs. Howard married again, and happily. She was then in full possession of her fifty thousand. Marks Black remained sane and became once more an efficient aid in his father's importing business. The old gentleman gave up the practice of medicine.

Next week's issue will contain "HIS LAST CHANCE; OR, UNCLE DICK'S FORTUNE."

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AL, THE ATHLETE, OR, THE CHAMPION OF THE CLUB

By R. T. BENNETT

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER II.

A Challenge.

"Those brutes!" panted the boy, glaring at the tramps.

"Harmless as kittens!" assured Adams. "They are our prisoners."

"Gee! Did you fellows capture them?"

"Yes. What were they doing with you?"

"Beating me because I attempted to run away from them."

"Then you are not with them because you wish to be?"

"No, indeed. I was stolen by Scotty."

He pointed at the tramp Al had captured, and that ugly-looking customer scowled, and with the red, scrubby bristles on his bloated face fairly standing on end, he roared at the boy:

"You dare ter say a word and I'll kill yer!"

His words made the little chap shiver and draw closer to Al; but he had some courage now, and he went on bravely:

"Yes, he stole me from old Mrs. Drew, in New York, and said he was going to make me help him in his thieving games as he went from town to town with the gang he traveled with. My name is Bud Roy. What's yours?"

"Oh, he did, did he?" asked Al, and he told Bud his name.

"Yes; and when I refused to do as he asked me to he gave me the worst beatings I ever had. My body is all covered with black-and-blue marks from the lickings he gave me."

A shout from Ed Turner interrupted him, and as Al whirled around to see what occasioned it, he saw another tramp had sneaked out of the bushes, cut the bonds of two of his friends, and the three had started off on a dead run for the river.

"After them!" cried Al, excitedly.

And he led the chase, followed by his three friends.

Desperation lent speed to the flying tramps, and they reached the water's side far in advance of the boys and leaped into a boat.

By the time the young athletes reached the river bank the trio of hobos were far from the shore.

There were plenty of good-sized stones on the shore, and when the boys sent a shower of them flying after the boat the tramps pulled at the oars with such strength that they quickly got out of range.

"Can't do any more here," said Al. "Let's go back to the other two and take them to the Widewood police station."

And back they went.

But when they reached the tramps' camp the two remaining men were gone, and the boy they had saved was seen running up the road as fast as he could go.

"We are cheated out of our prisoners," said Al. "But the boy will be safe enough now, and when we catch up with him we can see what is to be done with him. Hello! What's that—a carriage coming?"

The pounding of horses' hoofs was heard, and a moment afterward a very pretty pony and phaeton came around the bend in the road.

It was being driven by a very handsome young girl in stylish clothing, and her coachman held one end of a halter-rope over the rear of the carriage, while the other rope was tied around the neck of one of the tramps who had escaped!

The villain was running as fast as he could go to keep up with the speed of the pony, for if he had not done so he would have been choked.

The plump cheeks of the girl were flushed, and her dark blue eyes were sparkling with excitement as she reined in close to the boys.

"Jennie Harlow!" Al exclaimed in pleased tones.

"Hello, Al! I've caught one of them for you, with the aid of Patrick!" laughed the little beauty. "It wouldn't do to let them all get away, you know. Sorry we couldn't get the other one, too; but he waded into the river and was picked up by his friends in a rowboat."

"What did you know about the affair, Jennie?"

"Saw the whole thing," she answered. "We were behind the bend when you boys attacked the rogues. I must say I admired the fearless way you went to that little fellow's aid. But you should have left a guard over the two men who remained. No sooner were your backs turned when the pair got up and ran away with their hands tied behind their backs."

"And you chased them with your horse?"

"I hated to see you cheated out of the chance to put them in jail, so we went off after them. Patrick caught this one when he stumbled and fell. Then he harnessed him behind the phaeton as you see him now."

"Good for you, Patrick!"

"Who was the little boy?"

"A stolen child named Bud Roy."

"Kidnapped by the tramps?"

"So he said. There he is up the road waiting for us."

"Take him home with me in the carriage and see if I can get papa interested in him. He seems to be in need of friends just now. Patrick can take the prisoner to jail."

"It is awfully good of you, Jennie," said Al, soberly.

A silvery peal of laughter escaped her pretty mouth, and she nodded to the boys and drove toward the little stranger, while the coachman led the tramp away by the rope, which was still around his neck.

The four boys gazed after her and saw her take the boy into the carriage and head for the town.

"Al, that's a sweetheart worth having," said Nick with a grin.

"Hadrn't we better finish our run?" hinted Al.

"All ready!" announced Fred as he started off at a brisk trot.

There was not much talking while the boys were running, as it used up their breath, so they reached the two-mile oak, which was their mark, and, turning it, they started on the return.

Nothing was seen of Jennie, the tramps, or their protege along the road; but when they reached the club-house there were half a dozen of

the Midwood Juniors in bathing trunks swimming off the float.

Every one greeted Al and his pack with a yell. "Something doing," commented the young captain, as all the boys in the water came ashore and began beckoning excitedly to them.

"No wonder," chuckled Nick. "There's Jim Drew at the gym."

He referred to a dudish boy of seventeen, with red hair and a pug nose, who stood regarding them with a sneering smile.

"Hello, Adams!" said he, as the captain of the Midwoods walked up to him. "I've been waiting for you for some time."

"Oh, have you?" coolly asked Al. "What a pity you were put to so much trouble, Drew. Really, I am sorry for you! What do you want of me?"

The young snob got red in the face and snapped in surly tones:

"I've brought you a challenge."

"Indeed! Who from—the Mercury boys?"

"From the Mercury Athletic Club!" stiffly corrected Drew.

"Hand it over."

Drew took an envelope from his pocket and gave it to Al, and he tore it open. All the boys crowded around as he read aloud:

"To the Midwood Junior Athletic Club:

"You are hereby challenged to meet the Mercury Athletic Club in a game of base-ball, to be played on the South Common at 2 p. m. on Saturday, July 3. The trophy will be one-half of the gate receipts. An immediate reply is desired.

"Mercury Athletic Club.

"Per T. Knox, Secretary."

There was a deep silence for an instant after Al finished reading this announcement, and then the boys let out a yell, and every one of them began to shout to their captain to accept the challenge.

"Well?" demanded Drew at last, impatiently.

"You can see for yourself what the club thinks about it as a body," answered Al, smilingly. "But I shall call a meeting to discuss your bid to play against us, and I am pretty confident that it will be accepted."

"All right," was the reply. "We shall be ready for you."

When he was gone the angry boys hooted after him and if he heard a small fraction of the bitter remarks they made against his club he would have realized what a hornets' nest he had stirred up.

A meeting was at once called in the club-house, the challenge was unanimously accepted, and the secretary of the club wrote to the Mercury Athletic Club that they would play them on the date specified.

This done, they returned to the float, and as Al and his pack of runners had put on bathing costumes, they were soon in the river with the rest and were enjoying a good, cool swim.

Half an hour later all hands went to their several homes for their breakfasts, feeling as strong and healthy as their athletic training in the open air could make them.

There was a surprise in store for Al when he reached his home, for his mother handed him a letter which she had brought from the post-office.

When he opened it and glanced at the signature he was amazed to see that it was signed by George Harlow, the rich banker.

CHAPTER III.—Accused of a Crime.

"My son," said the widow, her kind, motherly face wearing an anxious expression as she sat down to the breakfast table with Al, "that letter seems to have made you feel very uneasy."

"It has puzzled me, admitted the boy. "It's from Mr. Harlow."

"Do you mind telling me what it contains?"

"I have no objection at all, mother. Here it is—read it."

He handed it to her, and she read the following lines:

"Mr. Albert Adams—Please call at my house this evening at eight o'clock. I wish to see you on important business, regarding a robbery. It is a matter with which you may be familiar. If so, you can come prepared to tell me all you know about it.

"Yours truly,

"George Harlow."

Mrs. Adams laid down the letter, and with a worried expression on her face she glanced fixedly at her boy and asked in nervous tones:

"Do you know anything about this robbery?"

"Not the slightest thing," was Al's emphatic reply.

"Is the letter a joke?"

"George Harlow is one of the most serious men I ever met."

"There is something mysterious in this allusion. It looks like a hint that you had better make a confession of guilt to him."

"I am at a loss to understand it!" declared the boy. "But I shall call on the old gentleman at the hour he named and find out what he means. I never knew before that he was robbed."

They finished their breakfast in silence, and after the young athlete had done several errands for his mother he went out. He had an engagement on the diamond near the club-house with the nine who were to play the Mercury team to coach them that morning.

They were all on hand by ten o'clock, and proved to be a fine lot of fellows, all about Al's age.

In addition to Marsh, Abby and Turner, there were Joe Winters, Dick Nelson, Harry Chase, Ben Rich and Sam Burt.

They were all good ballplayers, but Al had been studying their way of working, and had decided to change their positions on the diamond.

And he now told them so.

"I intend to keep my place in the box," he said to the boys, "and Nick shall continue to catch. But the rest of you will have to take your positions in the following order: Abby, first base; Turner, second, and Winters on third. Nelson will go to right field, Chase to left, Rich, short-stop, and Burt to center field."

"What's the object of the change?" asked Winters.

"It is done because I have seen that you could play those positions better than you could the positions you held before."

(To be continued.)

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, APRIL 13, 1927

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

BARBER USES VIOLIN

A Brixton barber in England has hit upon the novel idea of entertaining his patrons, and more especially his patronesses, with violin solos while their hair is being dressed.

The process of bobbing or shingling is a lengthy and tedious one for the woman in the chair, and barbers are sometimes at their wits' end to know how to keep up an interesting flow of chatter.

LEGLESS VENDOR LIVES IN HOTEL

When Roller Skate Pete was reluctant to shake the dust of Lancaster, Pa., police started an investigation. They found Pete had come to town in a large automobile and that he had quartered his wife in a downtown hotel before starting to sell pencils on the streets.

The man obtained his nickname from the fact that he travels about on roller skates attached to the stubs of what were his legs. Police say the man's wife was fashionably dressed and appeared well supplied with money.

DEVOID OF BEAUTY SHOPS

A village of Samsons and Delilahs, in a broadly figurative way, is Arlington, Ill., a community of 700 population, for the town boasts no barber. Main street is as devoid of beauty shops as it is of barber poles, and haircutting is reduced to a manual art of self-imposition unless the flappers and the sheiks want to go someplace else.

Even an itinerant barber, like the old-fashioned umbrella mender, would find hospitality in Arlington, thinks James Farmer, a barber of La Salle.

ECLIPSES OF SUN AND MOON OCCURRING IN 1927

Three eclipses of the sun and two eclipses of the moon are listed in the calendar for 1927. The first of these occurred on Jan. 3 and was called the annular eclipse of the sun.

The second eclipse will be that of the moon. It will occur on June 15 and the totality belt will be

visible in parts of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, on the continents of North and South America and in Australia.

An eclipse of the sun that will attract great attention will take place on June 29. The line of totality will pass from the Atlantic across the Irish Sea, North Wales, England from the Dee to the Tees, the North Sea, part of Scandinavia, the Arctic, northeast of Siberia, Bering Sea and the Aleutian Islands.

The second total eclipse of the moon is due on Dec. 8 and its totality belt will be visible in the Pacific Ocean, Australia, the Indian Ocean, Asia, Africa, eastern part of Europe and the northern part of North America.

The last eclipse of the year will be a partial eclipse of the sun on Dec. 24. This will be visible only in the Southern Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean and in the Anarctic regions.

LAUGHS

HISTORICAL RESEARCH

"Things have come to a pretty pass," said Leonidas at Thermopylae.—Yale Record.

WANT AD

Wanted—Sorority girl with wooden leg to stir home brew.—N. Y. Medley.

AN I. O. U.

An I. O. U. is another one of those paper waits, —M. I. T. Voo Doo.

THREE TIMES AND OUT

"I can't marry that woman."

"Why not?"

"I've divorced her three times now."—Cornell Widow.

NOT THAT

"Are you a student?"

"No; I just go to college here."—Lafayette Lyre.

AFTER EFFECTS

"Hello!"

"I beg your pardon! You've made a mistake.

"Aren't you the little girl I kissed at the party last night?"

"Must have been sister. She's sick."—Princeton Tiger.

ROUND NUMBERS

"I killed forty-nine birds yesterday."

"Why didn't you kill one more and make it a round fifty?"

"Well, forty-nine is around fifty, isn't it?"

—Vanderbilt Masquerader.

WRONG NUMBER

Visitor: Can you tell me if Bill Jones is up in his room?

Frish: Sorry, there's nobody home on the top floor!

Visitor: Oh, excuse me. I'll ask someone else.

—Columbia Jester.

The Boy Government Scout

"Look out!"

"Wah Ho! Wah Ho! Wah Ho!"

Jack Dean dodged down behind the rocks just in time, as his comrade, Old Montana, the veteran scout, caught him by the arm, and uttered the words of warning.

There sounded the chorus of wild Sioux war-whoops. A shower of bullets whistled about the rocks.

"We have got to look sharp, boyee, or we'll lose our hair," continued old Montana.

Jack Dean was a mere boy not more than eighteen.

But he already filled a position of responsibility and trust, for he was one of General Miles' scouts.

The Messiah craze among the Sioux was at its height. The band of Sitting Bull was encamped near the Bad Lands of Dakota, and while scouting along the confines of those strange, wild, and almost inaccessible wastes, seeking for the camp of the great Indian chief, upon whom they had received government orders to spy, Jack and Old Montana were detected.

Then began the race for life.

Sitting Bull's band ran the two scouts to the defile mentioned.

But the brave fellows were well mounted, and they had pressed on until, as their horses were giving out, Old Montana led the way to their present hiding-place.

They had placed their horses behind the ledges that sheltered them.

The scouts had plenty of ammunition, and they were armed with repeating Remingtons, revolvers and hunting-knives.

Light was approaching.

If the besieged scouts could only beat off the savages until darkness fell, there was still a chance they might elude the enemy.

A terrible yell from a redskin echoed through the defile, as Old Montana worked the trigger of his rifle, and the loud, crashing detonations rang out, like a report from a battery of many guns.

A tall Sioux, who was at the head of the two score savages, who were charging up the defile on their ponies at full speed, tumbled from his steed, and in less time than it takes to record it, four others of the howling red fiends fell.

Old Montana emptied his rifle.

Leaping back as he discharged the last bullet from his Remington, Old Montana cried out:

"Now, then, boyee. Throw yer lead like lightning and make every bullet tell!"

Jack Dean leaped to the old scout's place.

While the latter reloaded, Jack opened fire on the foe.

The lad was a dead shot, and there was not a single tremor in his arms as he held the leveled rifle. His eyes flashed. His fine handsome face was all aglow, with the light of a brave spirit.

The pandemonium of battle was terrible. Nothing more frightful than an Indian battle can be imagined.

Still the painted demons, some of whom were clad in white, blood-stained ghost-dance shirts, came on.

But as Jack discharged his last shot there was a halt.

A tall warrior, wearing the full eagle feathered headdress of a great chief, suddenly appeared in the rear of the charging band, and raising himself on his white mustang, whose sleek sides were streaked with red and yellow paint, he waved his crimson blanket.

"Sitting Bull!" cried Jack.

"Yes, boyee! As shure as shootin', that's old Sitting Bull himself!" replied Old Montana.

He had given the blanket "signal."

It meant "fall back."

The Sioux wheeled their ponies, and crouching over the necks of the sturdy animals, sent them flying back to meet the great chief.

Jack uttered a joyful cry.

Old Montana looked absolutely amazed, and he said, hastily:

"This yere beats me! What made old Sitting Bull call on his bloodhounds, when, if they had kept on in the face of our bullets, they would have made sure of us?"

"Well, he's given us a respite. That's the main thing. Now if we could only get our horses up the ledges, behind these rocks. Since the animals have had a short rest, we might give the reds another race," said Jack.

"That's so."

"Hello! There comes old Sitting Bull now!"

"Yes. He's riding right toward us."

"And he's waving a white ghost shirt."

"That's a fact. It's the 'peace signal.'"

The next moment the guttural tones of the great leader of the Sioux ghost-dancers reached the brave scouts, who were hemmed in there in the terrible "Bad Lands."

"Wah! Chief wants to have a talk with the palefaces!" cried Sitting Bull, in good English.

"All right, Injun, go ahead! We are a-listenin' to ye," Old Montana shouted back.

"The redmen have caught the palefaces in a trap, and they will take their scalps unless, if they have captured Red Fawn, the chief's daughter, they will send her back to the chief, unharmed," continued Sitting Bull.

"What does he mean? We have made no captive!" said Jack in a whisper.

"That's so. An' we haven't even seen an Injun gal since the ghost-dancers discovered us near their camp an' chased us here," responded old Montana.

"Come, come!" cried Sitting Bull. "Let the palefaces speak, and answer the chief!"

"Waal, redskin," shouted Old Montana, "suppose we send ye back the gal all right, what will ye do then?"

"Then the chief will leave the pale faces to go in peace," responded Sitting Bull at once.

"By mighty, boyee! I wish we did hev a holt of Red Fawn. But—Great Scott! What's that?"

Just then a fragment of rock from the lofty ledges above, and directly in the rear of the position occupied by the two scouts, dropped at old Montana's feet.

He caught up the rock.

About it a piece of bleached deerskin was wrapped.

The scout unfolded the deerskin.

"Whew! what's this?" he exclaimed.

"Writing—writing, as I live!" exclaimed Jack, looking over his shoulder.

"Yes. Read it, boyee."

Jack immediately read the following message,

PLUCK AND LUCK

which was written on the deerskin in a neat, girlish hand:

"I am a prisoner seeking to escape from the Sioux.
MYRA MORTON."

Just then Old Montana glanced up at the tall ledge from whence the message had dropped.

"Hello! Look there, boyee!"

Jack glanced up at the ledge.

Then he, too, saw what the veteran had first discovered.

Upon the top of the ledge stood a beautiful girl, evidently a real Indian maid, for her face was copper color, she had long black hair and midnight eyes, and she was dressed in the fringed and bearded costume of a Sioux princess.

"Red Fawn, I'll swar! She looks just as Rodger said that Injun gal did. An' she is an Injun gal, dead sure. Maybe this 'ere Mary Morton, that writ ther note, got the Injun gal to go up thar an' throw it down to us," said Old Montana.

"That may be, and yet——"

A wild cry from the ledge cut short what Jack was about to say further.

The scouts beheld two huge warriors suddenly spring into view on the ledge beside the girl.

They at once shouted to Sitting Bull in the Indian tongue, but neither Old Montana nor Jack understood just what they said.

The great chief set up an exultant yell. It was taken up and echoed by his braves, and Jack and Old Montana glanced apprehensively at the hostile band.

An instant later, when they again glanced up at the ledge, the Indian girl and the two warriors had vanished.

And the two scouts had no time to reflect upon the mystery.

On came the red fiends again in a mad charge. Deadly and fierce was the conflict that ensued. But the Sioux charged desperately, and they rode over the barrier behind which the devoted scouts crouched.

Hand to hand Jack and his old pard fought them, for they could not retreat further.

Jack and Old Montana were quickly overpowered.

Then, while they yelled and danced about them, the red fiends bound them hand and foot, and mounting them on their own horses, marched them away to the ghost-dancers' camp.

When Sitting Bull's stronghold, near the Bad Lands, was reached, Jack and the old scout were marched to a large teepee, and thrust into the shelter.

But, as they entered the lodge, they both caught a glimpse of the same beautiful Indian maid they had seen on the ledge, as she disappeared in Sitting Bull's own gaudily painted lodge of deer skin.

"That's Red Fawn, sure enough," whispered Jack.

"No doubt of that," assented Old Montana.

Meanwhile, Sitting Bull stalked into the prison lodge with two braves, and Old Montana was conducted into another lodge, while Jack was bound erect to one of the lodge poles where he remained.

He heard the redskins say at sunrise he and Old Montana were to be burned at the stake.

But half an hour later the two guards at the door of his teepee came inside, accompanied by

the beautiful, mysterious Indian princess Jack had seen on the ledge.

The girl carried two skin bottles, such as the Indians make, and three wooden cups.

"Let the braves drink of the strong water that will make their hearts glad, here where none of the other warriors can see them. Red Fawn will give them the fire-water which she took from the great chief's lodge if they will let her give the captives a drink, too," said the maid.

Eager for the liquor, the guards grunted out an assent, and Red Fawn gave them one of the skin jugs and two of the wooden cups.

While the redskins drank, Red Fawn placed herself before Jack, shielding him partially from the view of the guards, who at first glanced at her keenly, and gave the captive a drink.

Then she stood talking in whispered tones, while the braves continued to drink, and presently relaxed their vigilance. Quick as a flash Red Fawn drew a knife and severed Jack's bonds. But he remained standing, as if still bound. The guards presently reeled out of the teepee, and Red Fawn went with them. While the two warriors stood unsteadily at the door, on guard, Red Fawn glided away.

Jack waited half an hour.

Then he crept to the back of the lodge, and lifting the deerskin, crept under it, and stole away under cover of the darkness.

He got safely clear of the camp.

Then he hastened to a tall, dead tree.

There he found Old Montana in waiting.

The old scout, too, had been set free by the Indian girl. They hastened away. At some little distance they found the Indians' ponies, picketed. Having picked out two fine animals, they mounted them and rode away undetected through the night.

Mutual explanations were made.

The scouts rode on. Near midnight they met a strong band of Indian policemen, from the Standing Rock agency, who were in advance of a company of cavalymen.

The Indian policemen were under orders to enter the camp of the ghost-dancers and arrest Sitting Bull.

Jack and Old Montana returned there with them.

All the world knows that Sitting Bull was arrested, and afterward shot dead in the fight that ensued when the ghost-dancers tried to rescue him.

During the battle Jack and Old Montana succeeded in carrying Red Fawn safely out of the power of the Indians. They took her to Standing Rock agency, and later on she was returned to her home in North Dakota.

She was not an Indian, but a white girl—Myra Morton.

But before she parted with the boy government scout, she promised at no distant day to become his bride.

So the young couple that had been partners in peril are destined to be partners for life.

AS LONG AS USUAL

Roommate—How long are you going to be in that bathtub?

Ditto—Oh, about five feet nine.—Black & Blue Jay.

PLUCK AND LUCK

CURRENT NEWS

1913 FLIVVER STILL RUNNING

C. Pearl, curator of the Firelands Museum, is receiving wide publicity these days because he is driving a 1913 flivver with oil lights fore and aft and most of the other accessories which came with the machine.

UNDERGROUND ROADS IN PARIS

Underground passages for automobiles at the principal street intersections are to be constructed this year in Paris to relieve traffic congestion. The system will be extended if the idea works.

RIVER BED UNCOVERED

Buried beneath an overtop of adobe and clay hardpan, an ancient river bed, presumably that through which the Sacramento river at one time flowed, has been discovered by County Engineer H. H. Hume.

The discovery has been called to the attention of the Geographical Department of the University of California and a study of the course of the ancient river is expected.

\$15 FOR IDENTITY CARD

All Americans going to France and all who reside there even a few months yearly may be justly confused regarding the ritual of identity cards, due to recent numerous conflicting rulings handed down by the French government, but final instructions have now been given by the Ministry of the Interior. These are intended to clear up once and for all the many "musts" and "don'ts" which have been tossed about on the perplexing subject.

In the first place, the validity of an identity card has definitely been set for one year from the date of entry into France.

Identity cards are obligatory for all foreigners whose sojourn exceeds two months.

The fee for the issue or renewal of the identity card is 375 francs, or \$15.

It is reduced to 40 francs for parents of French children, students, authors, journalists, scientists and certain salaried workers. A special privilege is extended to foreigners who served in the French army or Foreign Legion, and they receive cards free of charge.

WOMAN BANDIT

Handling a pistol with dexterity, a well dressed young woman held up two stores and a restaurant in St. Louis recently and escaped with \$134. In each instance the woman entered as a customer and covered her victims. Then a young man came in and took the cash from the registers under her directions. She wore different hats and indicated a desire for cigarettes.

At the butcher shop of Edward Grosscupp the woman asked for pork chops, drew her pistol and told him to "lie down." Then she called to her confederate, who took \$2 from Grosscupp's pocket and \$2 from the cash register.

"We'll need some pork chops, too," the woman suggested.

So her assistant lifted a heavy rack of pork, valued at \$10, and they departed in the blue automobile.

NOW THAT IT'S SPRING, WE HAD A MILD WINTER

Predictions of goose-bone prophets last fall for a severe winter were far afield in the view of the Weather Bureau, which says the winter now closing was one of the mildest of a long mild series.

The winter of 1917-18 was severe practically everywhere east of the Rocky Mountains, but since that time the winters have been unusually mild.

In all parts of the country this winter was warmer than normal except in local areas in the Northwest, the bureau says. It was especially warm in the South, and fruit trees throughout the Central and Southern States have been prematurely advanced so that they face the danger of a late frost.

PARLORS FOR DOGS

A new form of business has sprung up in London as a result of the steady increase in the number of dog lovers in the city. Dogs now have their own chiropodists, hairdressers, manicurists and barbers.

A beauty parlor recently opened in London caters exclusively to the pampered pets of society. There are toilet articles, perfumes, oils, shampoos and soaps for every kind of dog from the tiny Pekingese to mastiffs and St. Bernards. The place looks like an ordinary barber shop except that there are tables instead of chairs and dog soap is used instead of shaving soap. There the canine customer can get a trim, a shingle, a shampoo and a shave and about the same cost as his master would pay in his own shop.

Conspicuous in the shop are supplies of dog biscuits with which the dogs are packed during the process of being beautified. While his hair is being cut the animal is allowed to munch contentedly on a choice bit of biscuit. The dogs' coats are first trimmed, then shampooed and bathed. Electric driers are used to prevent resulting colds. Then, if necessary, the customer has his nails cut and teeth cleaned by a new process.

The combings from the dogs' coats are proving a valuable by-product of the shop. Two chow dogs provided by this means a vest for their master and a scarf for their mistress. An old English sheep dog furnished sufficient hair when woven to make several yards of cloth.

The shop, which was at first opened more or less as an experiment, has proved to be a howling success, the line of waiting customers growing longer and longer each day. The managers find that dog owners are willing to pay comparatively high rates to have their pets properly trimmed and washed, and, so convenient is the practice of sending the animals to a regular shop, that they have made standing weekly appointments.

TIMELY TOPICS

UP-TO-DATE ROADS

Part of the task of modernizing London's roads is being accomplished through the construction of a series of very expensive arterial highways which will finally serve to drive new ways of entry into the city.

The old lanes are not always widened in the country, but where they are not the plan is to build parallel roads wherever rights of way can be obtained.

JUMP QUICK IN BERLIN

Since the establishment of a light control system on a number of the city's principal streets in Berlin, Germany, pedestrians are learning the signal changes to green, the line of motor vehicles plunges forward apparently regardless of any pedestrian who may be on the roadway. As a result the lively jumping of foot travelers is getting to be one of the sights of the town.

NEW SAFETY SLOGANS

During a recent educational accident prevention campaign in a Massachusetts county school children submitted 1,556 safety slogans. The following were among the best offered:

"Don't try to show your speed; show your intelligence."

"Look ahead; never mind the girl."

"Drive with care; other lives amount to just as much as yours."

"Protect pedestrians; don't abolish them."

LONG HAIR ONCE MORE

Long hair for co-eds is gaining in popularity at the University of Kansas.

Beginning a few weeks ago when a few of the elite of the campus decided to be "different," the long hair movement is growing steadily. Fashion dictators on the hill predict that by Spring bobbed hair will be almost as scarce as long hair was a few weeks ago.

A check of 200 representative women of the campus shows 151 letting their hair grow.

HIGHWAY SYSTEM OF THE UNITED STATES

The Bureau of Public Roads of the Department of Agriculture has completed the work of mapping the United States system of highways, consisting of 80,000 miles of the most important roads in the country. The system selected embraces ten main transcontinental routes, designated by numbers which are multipliers of 10, while the important north and south routes are numbered 1, 11, 21, 31, etc. The route-numbering system which has been decided upon will be of great assistance to tourists.

BOBBED HAIR TOO EXPENSIVE

Two hundred working girls and matrons are up in arms in Tannrode, Thuringia, over an attempt to introduce the bobbed head forcibly. At the electric works a bulletin unexpectedly appeared that the women must have their hair bobbed or run the risk of being fired.

The women pointed out that they are earning but 4 to 5 cents an hour, which means a weekly wage of about \$2. They figure the cost of maintaining the bob at 37 cents a week, or almost 20 per cent. of their wages.

MORE PAY FOR WAITERS

Waiters in Berlin are demanding more pay.

The union has presented demands for 15 per cent. tips instead of the prevailing 10 per cent., which is automatically added on to the bill in all restaurants and coffee houses.

The additional burden, it is proposed, shall be borne by proprietors. The waiters also want an eight-hour day instead of the prevailing 8 1-2 hours, and 15 per cent. increase in wages for overtime.

PROTECT CITY'S BUILDINGS

Builders who in the middle ages planned and erected the wonderful buildings that ornament the old German cities were remarkable craftsmen, but they could not foresee the traffic of the twentieth century.

And so the city fathers of Rothenburg-on-the-Tauber in Nuremberg now face the problem of how to protect the city's historic buildings from damage from automobile traffic in the narrow streets.

SIXTY SECONDS IN A MINUTE

How many seconds make a minute? Everybody knows the answer—sixty. But why? We can blame it on the Babylonians. In the system of notation two stood out—the decimal, which counted by tens, and the sexagesimal, which counted by sixties. The choice of sixty as a unit of notation was no accident, either. There is no other number which has so many divisors as sixty. It may be divided by one, two, three, four, five, six and ten.

The Babylonians divided the sun's daily journey into twenty-four periods. Each period or hour was subdivided into sixty minutes, and each minute into sixty seconds. The whole course of the sun during the twenty-four parasangs, or 720 stadia, or 360 degrees. The system was handed on to the Greek, and thus it was carried down the middle ages. When the French revolutionized the system of weights, measures, coins and dates, during the revolution, they refrained from interfering with the sexagesimal system of time. Gradually, for purposes of standardization, the system originating in Babylon spread all over the world—wherever the sun rose and set an hour was sixty minutes, a minute was sixty seconds.

When the Babylonians were working on the standardization of time in their empire, their astronomers compared the apparent progress made by the sun during one hour at the time of the epinox to the progress made by a good walker during the same time. Both accomplished a parasang, or 3.88 miles, in the same time.

PLUCK AND LUCK

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